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A DAY'S RIDE: A LIFE'S ROMANCE.

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

IN TWO VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

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A LIFE'S ROMANCE.

BY

CHARLES LEVER,

AUTHOR OF "CHARLES O'MALLEY," ETC., ETC.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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A DAY'S RIDE
A FINE ROMANCE

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A DAY'S RIDE:

A LIFE'S ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

It has been said, that any man, no matter how small and insignificant the post he may have filled in life, who will faithfully record the events in which he has borne a share, even though incapable of himself deriving profit from the lessons he has learned, may still be of use to others — sometimes a guide, sometimes a warning. I hope this is true. I like to think it so, for I like to think that even I — A. S. P. — if I cannot adorn a tale, may at least point a moral.

Certain families are remarkable for the way in which peculiar gifts have been transmitted for ages. Some have been great in arms, some in letters, some in statecraft, displaying in successive generations the same high qualities which had won their first renown. In an humble fashion, I may lay claim to belong to this category. My ancestors have been apothecaries for one hundred and forty odd years. Joseph Potts, "drug and condiment man," lived in the reign of Queen Anne, at Lower Liffey-street, No. 87; and to be remembered passingly, has the name of Mr. Addison

amongst his clients; the illustrious writer having, as it would appear, a peculiar fondness for "Potts's Linature," whatever that may have been; for the secret died out with my distinguished forefather. There was Michael Joseph Potts, "licensed for chemicals," in Mary's Abbey, about thirty years later; and so we come on to Paul Potts and Son, and to then, Launcelot Peter Potts, "Pharmaceutical Chemist to his Excellency and the Irish Court," the father of him who now bespeaks your indulgence.

My father's great misfortune in life was the ambition to rise above the class his family had adorned for ages. He had, as he averred, a soul above senna, and a destiny higher than black drop. He had heard of a tailor's apprentice becoming a great general. He had himself seen a wig-maker elevated to the wool-sack; and he kept continually repeating, "Mine is the only walk in life that leads to no high rewards. What matters it whether my mixtures be addressed to the refined organisations of rank, or the 'dura ilia rasorum' — I shall live and die an apothecary. From every class are men selected for honours save mine, and though it should rain baronetcies, the bloody hand would never fall to the lot of a compounding chemist."

"What do you intend to make of Algernon Sydney, Mr. Potts?" would say one of his neighbours. "Bring him up to your own business? A first-rate connexion to start with in life."

"My own business, sir? I'd rather see him a chimney-sweep."

"But, after all, Mr. Potts, being so to say, at the head of your profession—"

"It is not a profession, sir. It is not even a trade. High science and skill have long since left our insulted and outraged ranks; we are mere commission agents for the sale of patent quackeries. What respect has the world any longer for the great phials of ruby, and emerald, and marine blue, which, at nightfall, were once the magical emblems of our mysteries, seen afar through the dim mists of louring atmospheres, or throwing their lurid glare upon the passers-by. What man, now, would have the courage to adorn his surgery — I suppose you would prefer I should call it a 'shop' — with skeleton fishes, snakes, or a stuffed alligator? Who, in this age of chemical infidelity, would surmount his door with the ancient symbols of our art — the golden pestle and mortar? Why, sir, I'd as soon go forth to apply leeches in a herald's tabard, or a suit of Milan mail. And what have they done, sir?" he would ask with a roused indignation — "what have they done by their reforms? In invading the mystery of medicine, they have ruined its prestige. The precious drops you once regarded as the essence of an elixir vitæ, and whose efficacy lay in your faith, are now so much strychnine, or creosote, which you take with fear and think over with foreboding."

I suppose it can only be ascribed to that perversity which seems a great element in human nature, that, exactly in the direct ratio of my father's dislike to his profession was *my* fondness for it. I used to

take every opportunity of stealing into the laboratory, watching intently all the curious proceedings that went on there, learning the names and properties of the various ingredients, the gases, the minerals, the salts, the essences; and although, as may be imagined, science took, in these narrow regions, none of her loftiest flights, they were to me the most marvellous and high-soaring efforts of human intelligence. I was just at that period of life — the first opening of adolescence — when fiction and adventure have the strongest hold upon our nature, my mind filled with the marvels of Eastern romance, and imbued with a sentiment, strong as any conviction, that I was destined to a remarkable life. I passed days in dreamland — what I should do in this or that emergency; how rescue myself from such a peril; how profit by such a stroke of fortune; by what arts resist the machinations of this adversary; how conciliate the kind favour of that. In the wonderful tales that I read, frequent mention was made of alchemy and its marvels — now, the search was for some secret of endless wealth, now, it was for undying youth or undecaying beauty; while in other stories, I read of men who had learned how to read the thoughts, trace the motives, and ultimately sway the hearts of their fellowmen, till life became to them a mere field for the exercise of their every will and caprice, throwing happiness and misery about them as the humour inclined. The strange life of the laboratory fitted itself exactly to this phase of my mind.

The wonders it displayed, the endless combinations and transformations it effected, were as marvellous as any that imaginative fiction could devise; but even these were nothing compared to the mysterious influence of the place itself upon my nervous system, particularly when I found myself there alone. In the tales with which my head was filled, many of them the wild fancies of Grimm, Hoffman, or Musæus, nothing was more common than to read how some eager student of the black art, deep in the mystery of forbidden knowledge, had, by some chance combination, by some mere accidental admixture of this ingredient with that, suddenly arrived at the great SECRET, that terrible mystery which for centuries and centuries had evaded human search. How often have I watched the fluid as it boiled and bubbled in the retort, till I thought the air globules, as they came to the surface, observed a certain rhythm and order. Were these, words? Were they symbols of some hidden virtue in the liquid? Were there intelligences to whom these could speak, and thus reveal a wondrous history? And then, again, with what an intense eagerness have I gazed on the lurid smoke that arose from some smelting mass, now fancying that the vapour was about to assume form and substance, and now, imagining that it lingered lazily, as though waiting for some cabalistic word of mine to give it life and being? How heartily did I censure the folly that had ranked alchemy amongst the absurdities of human invention. Why rather had not its facts been treasured and its discoveries recorded, so that, in

some future age a great intelligence arising, might classify and arrange them, showing, at least, what were practicable and what were only evasive. Alchemists were, certainly, men of pure lives, self-denying, and humble. They made their art no stepping-stone to worldly advancement or success, they sought no favour from princes, nor any popularity from the people; but, retired and estranged from all the pleasures of the world, followed their one pursuit, unnoticed and unfriended. How cruel, therefore, to drag them forth from their lonely cells, and expose them to the gaping crowd as devil worshippers: How inhuman to denounce men whose only crimes were lives of solitude and study! The last words of Peter von Vordt, burned for a wizard, at Haarlem, in 1306, were, "Had they left this poor head a little longer on my shoulders, it would have done more for human happiness than all this bonfire!"

How rash and presumptuous is it, besides, to set down any fixed limits to man's knowledge! Is not every age an advance upon its predecessors, and are not the commonest acts of our present civilisation perfect miracles as compared with the usages of our ancestors? But why do I linger on this theme, which I only introduced to illustrate the temper of my boyish days? As I grew older, books of chivalry and romance took possession of my mind, and my passion grew for lives of adventure. Of all kinds of existence, none seemed to me so enviable as that of those men, who, regarding life as a vast ocean, hoisted sail, and set

forth, not knowing nor caring whither, but trusting to their own manly spirit for extrication out of whatever difficulties might beset them. What a narrow thing, after all, was our modern civilisation, with all its forms and conventionalities, with its gradations of rank and its orders! How hopeless for the adventurous spirit to war with the stern discipline of an age that marshalled men in ranks like soldiers, and told that each could only rise by successive steps! How often have I wondered was there any more of adventure left in life? Were there incidents in store for him who, in the true spirit of an adventurer, should go in search of them? As for the newer worlds of Australia and America, they did not possess for me much charm. No great association linked them with the past; no echo came out of them of that heroic time of feudalism, so peopled with heart-stirring characters. The life of the bush or the prairie had its incidents, but they were vulgar and commonplace; and worse, the associates and companions of them were more vulgar still. Hunting down Pawnees or buffaloes was as mean and ignoble a travesty of feudal adventure, as was the gold diggings at Bendigo of the learned labours of the alchemist. The perils were unexciting, the rewards prosaic and commonplace. No. I felt that Europe — in some remote regions — and the East — in certain less visited tracts — must be the scenes best suited to my hopes. With considerable labour I could spell my way through a German romance, and I saw, in the stories of Fouqué, and even of Goethe, that there still survived in the

mind of Germany many of the features which gave the colouring to a feudal period. There was, at least, a dreamy indifference to the present, a careless abandonment to what the hour might bring forth, so long as the dreamer was left to follow out his fancies in all their mysticism, that lifted men out of the vulgarities of this work-o'-day world; and I longed to see a society where learning consented to live upon the humblest pittance, and beauty dwelt unflattered in obscurity.

I was now entering upon manhood, and my father — having with that ambition so natural to an Irish parent who aspires highly for his only son, destined me for the Bar — made me a student of Trinity College, Dublin.

What a shock to all the romance of my life were the scenes into which I now was thrown! With hundreds of companions to choose from, I found not one congenial to me. The reading men, too deeply bent upon winning honours, would not waste a thought upon what could not advance their chances of success. The idle, only eager to get through their career undetected in their ignorance, passed lives of wild excess or stupid extravagance.

What was I to do amongst such associates? What I did do — avoid them, shun them, live in utter estrangement from all their haunts, their ways, and themselves. If the proud man who has achieved success in life encounters immense difficulties when, separating himself from his fellows, he acknowledges no companionship, nor admits any to his confidence, it may

be imagined what must be the situation of one who adopts this isolation without any claim to superiority whatever. As can easily be supposed, I was the butt of my fellow-students, the subject of many sarcasms and practical jokes. The whole of my Freshman year was a martyrdom. I had no peace, was rhymed on by poetasters, caricatured by draughtsmen, till the name of Potts became proverbial for all that was eccentric, ridiculous, and absurd.

Curran has said "one can't draw an indictment against a nation;" in the same spirit did I discover "one cannot fight his whole division." For a while I believe I experienced a sort of heroism in my solitary state; I felt the spirit of a Coriolanus in my heart, and muttered, "I banish *you!*" but this self-supplied esteem did not last long, and I fell into a settled melancholy. The horrible truth was gradually forcing its way slowly, clearly, through the mists of my mind, that there might be something in all this sarcasm, and I can remember to this hour the day — ay, and the very place — wherein the questions flashed across me: Is my hair as limp, my nose as long, my back as arched, my eyes as green as they have pictured them? Do I drawl so fearfully in my speech? Do I drag my heavy feet along so ungracefully? Good Heavens! have they possibly a grain of fact to sustain all this fiction against me?

And if so — horrible thought — am I the stuff to go forth and seek adventures? Oh the ineffable bitterness of this reflection! I remember it in all its anguish,

and even now, after years of such experience as have befallen few men, I can recal the pain it cost me. While I was yet in the paroxysm of that sorrow, which assured me that I was not made for doughty deeds, nor to captivate some fair princess, I chanced to fall upon a little German volume entitled *Wald Wandlungen und Abentheure*, von Heinrich Stebbe. Forest rambles and adventures, and of a student too! for so Herr Stebbe announces himself, in a short introduction to the reader. I am not going into any account of his book. It is in Voss's Leipzig Catalogue, and not unworthy of perusal by those who are sufficiently imbued with Germanism to accept the changeful moods of a mystical mind, with all its visionary glimpses of light and shade, its doubts, fears, hopes and fancies, in lieu of real incidents and actual events. Of adventures, properly speaking, he had none. The people he met, the scenes in which he bore his part, were as commonplace as need be. The whole narrative never soared above that bread-and-butter life — *Butterbrod-Leben* — which Germany accepts as romance; but meanwhile the reflex of whatever passed around him in the narrator's own mind, was amusing; so ingeniously did he contrive to interweave the imaginary with the actual, throwing over the most ordinary pictures of life a sort of hazy indistinctness — meet atmosphere for mystical creation.

If I did not always sympathise with him in his brain-wrought wanderings, I never ceased to take pleasure in his description of scenery, and the heart-

felt delight he experienced in journeying through a world so beautiful and so varied. There was also a little woodcut frontispiece which took my fancy much, representing him as he stood leaning on his horse's mane, gazing rapturously on the Elbe, from one of the cliffs off the Saxon Switzerland. How peaceful he looked, with his long hair waving gracefully on his neck, and his large soft eyes turned on the scene beneath him. His clasped hands, as they lay on the horse's mane, imparted a sort of repose, too, that seemed to say, "I could linger here ever so long." Nor was the horse itself without a significance in the picture: he was a long-maned, long-tailed, patient-looking beast, well befitting an enthusiast, who doubtless took but little heed of how he went or where. If his lazy eye denoted lethargy, his broad feet and short legs vouched for his sure-footedness.

Why should not I follow Stebbe's example? Surely there was nothing too exalted or extravagant in his plan of life. It was simply to see the world as it was, with the aid of such combinations as a fertile fancy could contribute; not to distort events, but to arrange them, just as the landscape painter in the licence of his craft moves that massive rock more to the foreground, and throws that stone pine a little further to the left of his canvas. There was, indeed, nothing to prevent my trying the experiment. Ireland was not less rich in picturesque scenery than Germany, and if she boasted no such mighty stream as the Elbe, the banks of the Blackwater and the Nore were still full

of woodland beauty; and then, there was lake scenery unrivalled throughout Europe.

I turned to Stebbe's narrative for details of his outfit. His horse he bought at Nordheim for one hundred and forty gulden — about ten pounds; his saddle and knapsack cost him a little more than forty shillings; with his map, guide-book, compass, and some little extras, all were comprised within twenty pounds sterling — surely not too costly an equipage for one who was adventuring on a sea wide as the world itself.

As *my* trial was a mere experiment, to be essayed on the most limited scale, I resolved not to buy, but only hire, a horse, taking him by the day, so that if any change of mind or purpose supervened, I should not find myself in any embarrassment.

A fond uncle had just left me a legacy of a hundred pounds, which besides, was the season of the long vacation; thus did everything combine to favour the easy execution of a plan, which I determined forthwith to put into practice.

"Something quiet and easy to ride, sir, you said?" repeated Mr. Dycer after me, as I entered his great establishment for the sale and hire of horses. "Show the gentleman four hundred and twelve."

"Oh, Heaven forbid!" I exclaimed, in my ignorance; "such a number would only confuse me."

"You mistake me, sir," blandly interposed the dealer; "I meant the horse that stands at that number. Lead him out, Tim. He's gentle as a lamb, sir, and,

if you find he suits you, can be had for a song. — I mean a tenpound note."

"Has he a long mane and tail?" I asked, eagerly.

"The longest tail and the fullest mane I ever saw. But here he comes." And with the word, there advanced towards us, at a sort of easy amble, a small-sized cream-coloured horse, with white mane and tail. Knowing nothing of horseflesh, I was fain to content myself with such observations as other studies might supply me with; and so I closely examined his head, which was largely developed in the frontal region, with moral qualities fairly displayed. He had memory large, and individuality strong; nor was wit, if it exist in the race, deficient. Over the orbital region the depressions were deep enough to contain my closed fist, and when I remarked upon them to the groom, he said, "'Tis his teeth will tell you the rayson of that;" a remark which I suspect was a sarcasm upon my general ignorance.

I liked the creature's eye. It was soft, mild, and contemplative; and although not remarkable for brilliancy, possessed a subdued lustre that promised well for temper and disposition.

"Ten shillings a day — make it three half-crowns by the week, sir. You'll never hit upon the like of him again," said the dealer, hurriedly, as he passed me, on his other avocations.

"Better not lose him, sir; he's well known at Batty's, and they'll have him in the circus again, if

they see him. Wish you saw him with his fore-legs on a table, ringing the bell for his breakfast."

"I'll take him by the week, though, probably, a day or two will be all I shall need."

"Four hundred and twelve for Mr. Potts," Dycer screamed out. "Shoe's removed, and to be ready in the morning."

CHAPTER II.

I HAD heard and read frequently of the exhilarating sensations of horse exercise. My fellow-students were full of stories of the hunting-field and the race-course. Wherever, indeed, a horse figured in a narrative, there was an almost certainty of meeting some incident to stir the blood and warm up enthusiasm. Even the passing glimpses one caught of sporting prints in shop-windows were suggestive of the pleasure imparted by a noble and chivalrous pastime.

I never closed my eyes all night, revolving such thoughts in my head. I had so worked up my enthusiasm, that I felt like one who is about to cross the frontier of some new land where people, language, ways and habits, are all unknown to him. "By this hour to-morrow night," thought I, "I shall be in the land of strangers, who have never seen, nor so much as heard of me. There, will invade no traditions of the scoffs and jibes I have so long endured; none will have received the disparaging estimate of my abilities, which my class-fellows love to propagate; I shall simply be the traveller who arrived at sundown mounted on a cream-coloured palfrey — a stranger, sad-looking, but gentle withal, of courteous address, blandly demanding lodging for the night. "Look to my horse, ostler,"

shall I say, as I enter the honeysuckle-covered porch of the inn. "Blondel" — I will call him Blondel — "is accustomed to kindly usage." With what quiet dignity, the repose of a conscious position, do I follow the landlord as he shows me to my room. It is humble, but neat and orderly. I am contented. I tell him so. I am sated and wearied of luxury; sick of a gilded and glittering existence. I am in search of repose and solitude. I order my tea; and, if I ask the name of the village, I take care to show by my inattention that I have not heard the answer, nor do I care for it.

Now I should like to hear how they are canvassing me in the bar, and what they think of me in the stable. I am, doubtless, a peer, or a peer's eldest son. I am a great writer, the wondrous poet of the day; or the pre-Raphaelite artist; or I am a youth heart-broken by infidelity in love; or mayhap, a dreadful criminal. I liked this last the best, the interest was so intense; not to say that there is, to men who are not constitutionally courageous, a strong pleasure in being able to excite terror in others.

But I hear a horse's feet on the silent street. I look out. Day is just breaking. Tim is holding Blondel at the door. My hour of adventure has struck, and noiselessly descending the stairs, I issue forth.

"He is a trifle tender on the fore-feet, your honour," said Tim, as I mounted, "but when you get him off the stones on a nice piece of soft road, he'll go like a four-year old."

"But he *is* young, Tim, isn't he?" I asked, as I tendered him my half-crown.

"Well, not to tell your honour a lie, he is not," said Tim, with the energy of a man whose veracity had cost him little less than a spasm.

"How old would you call him, then?" I asked, in that affected ease that seemed to say, "Not that it matters to me if he were Methuselah."

"I couldn't come to his age exactly, your honour," he replied, "but I remember seeing him fifteen years ago, dancing a hornpipe, more by token for his own benefit; it was at Cooke's Circus in Abbey-street, and there wasn't a hair's difference between him now, and then, except, perhaps, that he had a star on the forehead, where you just see the mark a little darker now."

"But that is a star, plain enough," said I, half vexed.

"Well, it is, and it is not," muttered Tim, doggedly, for he was not quite satisfied with my right to disagree with him.

"He's gentle, at all events?" I said, more confidently.

"He's a lamb!" replied Tim. "If you were to see the way he lets the Turks run over his back, when he's wounded in Timour the Tartar, you wouldn't believe he was a livin' baste."

"Poor fellow!" said I, caressing him. He turned his mild eye upon me, and we were friends from that hour.

What a glorious morning it was, as I gained the out-skirts of the city, and entered one of those shady alleys that lead to the foot of the Dublin mountains! The birds were opening their morning hymn, and the earth, still fresh from the night dew, sent up a thousand delicious perfumes. The road on either side was one succession of handsome villas or ornamental cottages, whose grounds were laid out in the perfection of landscape gardening. There were but few persons to be seen at that early hour, and in the smokeless chimneys and closed shutters I could read that all slept — slept in that luxurious hour when Nature unveils, and seems to revel in the sense of unregarded loveliness. “Ah, Potts,” said I, “thou hast chosen the wiser part; thou wilt see the world after thine own guise, and not as others see it.” Has my reader not often noticed that in a picture-gallery the slightest change of place, a move to the left or right, a chance approach or retreat, suffices to make what seemed a hazy confusion of colour and gloss a rich and beautiful picture? So is it in the actual world, and just as much depends on the point from which objects are viewed. Do not be discouraged, then, by the dark aspect of events. It may be that by the slightest move to this side or to that, some unlooked-for sunlight shall slant down and light up all the scene. Thus musing, I gained a little grassy strip that ran along the roadside, and, gently touching Blondel with my heel, he broke out into a delightful canter. The motion, so easy and swimming, made it a perfect ecstasy to sit there floating at will

through the thin air, with a moving panorama of wood, water, and mountain around me.

Emerging at length from the thickly wooded plain, I began the ascent of the Three Rock Mountain, and, in my slackened speed, had full time to gaze upon the bay beneath me, broken with many a promontory, backed by the broad bluff of Howth, and the more distant Lambay. No, it is *not* finer than Naples. I did not say it was; but, seeing it as I then saw it, I thought it could not be surpassed. Indeed, I went further, and defied Naples in this fashion:

Though no volcano's lurid light
Over thy blue sea steals along,
Nor Pescator beguiles the night
With cadence of his simple song;

Though none of dark Calabria's daughters
With tinkling lute thy echoes wake,
Mingling their voices with the water's,
As 'neath the prow the ripples break;

Although no cliffs with myrtle crown'd,
Reflected in thy tide, are seen,
Nor olives, bending to the ground,
Relieve the laurel's darker green;

Yet — yet —

Ah, there was the difficulty — I had begun with the plaintiff, and I really hadn't a word to say for the defendant; and so, voting comparisons odious, I set forward on my journey.

As I rode into Enniskerry to breakfast, I had the satisfaction of overhearing some very flattering com-

ments upon Blondel, which rather consoled me for some less laudatory remarks upon my own horsemanship. By the way, can there possibly be a more ignorant sarcasm than to say a man rides like a tailor? Why, of all trades, who so constantly sits straddle-legged as a tailor? and yet he is the especial mark of this impertinence.

I pushed briskly on after breakfast, and soon found myself in the deep shady woods that lead to the Dargle. I hurried through the picturesque demesne, associated as it was with a thousand little vulgar incidents of city junkettings, and rode on for the Glen of the Downs. Blondel and I had now established a most admirable understanding with each other. It was a sort of reciprocity treaty by which *I* bound myself never to control *him*, he in turn consenting not to unseat *me*. He gave the initiative to the system, by setting off at his pleasant little rocking canter whenever he chanced upon a bit of favourable ground, and invariably pulled up when the road was stony or uneven; thus showing me that he was a beast with what Lord Brougham would call "a wise discretion." In like manner he would halt to pluck any stray ears of wild oats that grew along the hedge sides, and occasionally slake his thirst at convenient streamlets. If I dismounted to walk at his side, he moved along unheld, his head almost touching my elbow, and his plaintive blue eye mildly beaming on me with an expression that almost spoke — nay, it did speak. I'm sure I felt it, as though I could swear to it, whispering,

"Yes, Potts, two more friendless creatures than ourselves are not easy to find. The world wants not either of us; not that we abuse it, despise it, or treat it ungenerously — rather the reverse, we incline favourably towards it, and would, occasion serving, befriend it — but we are not, so to say, 'of it.' There may be, here and there, a man or a horse that would understand or appreciate us, but they stand alone — they are not belonging to classes. They are, like ourselves, exceptional." If his expression said this much, there was much unspoken melancholy in his sad glance also, which seemed to say, "What a deal of sorrow could I reveal if I might — what injuries — what wrong — what cruel misconceptions of my nature and disposition — what mistaken notions of my character and intentions! What pretentious stupidity, too, have I seen preferred before me — creatures with, mayhap, a glossier coat or a more silky forelock —" "Ah, Blondel, take courage — men are just as ungenerous, just as erring!" "Not that I have not had my triumphs too," he seemed to say, as, cocking his ears, and ambling with a more elevated toss of the head, his tail would describe an arch like a waterfall; "no salmon-coloured silk stockings danced sarabands on *my* back; I was always ridden in the Haute Ecole by Monsieur L'Etrier himself, the stately gentleman in jackboots and long-waisted dress-coat, whose five minutes no persuasive bravos could ever prolong." I thought — nay, I was certain at times — that I could read in his thoughtful face the painful sorrows of one who had

outlived popular favour, and who had survived to see himself supplanted and dethroned.

There are no two destinies which chime in so well together as that of him who is beaten down by sheer distrust of himself, and that of the man who has seen better days. Although the one be just entering on life, while the other is going out of it, if they meet on the threshold, they stop to form a friendship. Now, though Blondel was not a man, he supplied to my friendlessness the place of one.

The sun was near its setting as I rode down the little hill into the village of Ashford, a picturesque little spot in the midst of mountains, and with a bright clear stream bounding through it, as fearlessly as though in all the liberty of open country. I tried to make my entrance what stage people call effective. I threw myself, albeit a little jaded, into an attitude of easy indifference, slouched my hat to one side, and suffered the sprig of laburnum with which I had adorned it to droop in graceful guise over one shoulder. The villagers stared; some saluted me; and taken, perhaps, by the cool acquiescence of my manner as I returned the courtesy, seemed well disposed to believe me of some note.

I rode into the little stable-yard of the Lamb and dismounted. I gave up my horse, and walked into the inn. I don't know how others feel it — I greatly doubt if they will have the honesty to tell — but for myself I confess that I never entered an inn or an hotel without a most uncomfortable conflict within:

a struggle made up of two very antagonistic impulses — the wish to seem something important, and a lively terror lest the pretence should turn out to be costly. Thus swayed by opposing motives, I sought a compromise by assuming that I was incog.; for the present a nobody, to be treated without any marked attention, and to whom the acme of respect would be a seeming indifference.

"What is your village called?" I said, carelessly, to the waiter as he laid the cloth.

"Ashford, your honour. 'Tis down in all the books," answered the waiter.

"Is it noted for anything, or is there anything remarkable in the neighbourhood?"

"Indeed there is sir, and plenty. There's Glenmalure and the Devil's Glen; and there's Mr. Snow Malone's place, that everybody goes to see; and there's the fishing of Doyle's river — trout, eight, nine, maybe, twelve, pounds' weight; and there's Mr. Reeve's cottage — a Swiss cottage belike — at Kinmacreehy; but, to be sure, there must be an order for that."

"I never take much trouble," I said, indolently. "Who have you got in the house at present?"

"There's young Lord Keldrum, sir, and two more with him, for the fishing; and the next room to you here, there's Father Dyke, from Inistioge, and he's going, by the same token, to dine with the lord to-day."

"Don't mention to his lordship that I am here," said I, hastily. "I desire to be quite unknown down here." The waiter promised obedience, without vouch-

safing any misgivings as to the possibility of his disclosing what he did not know.

To his question as to my dinner, I carelessly said, as if I were in a West-end club, "Never mind soup — a little fish — a cutlet and partridge. Or order it yourself — I am indifferent." The waiter had scarcely left the room when I was startled by the sound of voices so close to me as to seem at my side. They came from a little wooden balcony to the adjoining room, which, by its pretentious bow-window I recognised to be the state apartment of the inn, and now in the possession of Lord Keldrum and his party. They were talking away in that gay, rattling, discursive fashion very young men do amongst each other, and discussed fishing-flies, the neighbouring gentlemen's seats, and the landlady's niece.

"By the way, Kel," cried one, "it was in your visit to the bar that you met your priest, wasn't it?"

"Yes; I offered him a cigar, and we began to chat together, and so I asked him to dine with us to-day."

"And he refused?"

"Yes; but he has since changed his mind, and sent a message to say he'll be with us at eight."

"I should like to see your father's face, Kel, when he heard of your entertaining the Reverend Father Dyke at dinner."

"Well, I suppose he would say it was carrying conciliation a little too far; but as the adage says, 'A la guerre ——'"

At this juncture, another burst in amongst them,

calling out, "You'd never guess who's just arrived here, in strict incog., and having bribed Mike, the waiter, to silence. Burgoyne!"

"Not Jack Burgoyne?"

"Jack himself. I had the portrait so correctly drawn by the waiter, that there's no mistaking him; the long hair, green complexion, sheepish look, all perfect. He came on a hack, a little cream-coloured pad he got at Dycer's, and fancies he's quite unknown."

"What *can* he be up to, now?"

"I think I have it," said his lordship. "Courtenay has got two three-year olds down here at his uncle's, one of them under heavy engagements for the spring meetings. Master Jack has taken a run down to have a look at them."

"By Jove, Kel, you're right! he's always wide awake, and that stupid leaden-eyed look he has, has done him good service in the world."

"I say, old Oxley, shall we dash in and unearth him? Or shall we let him fancy that we know nothing of his being here at all?"

"What does Hammond say?"

"I'd say, leave him to himself," replied a deep voice; "you can't go and see him without asking him to dinner; and he'll walk into us after, do what we will."

"Not, surely, if we don't play," said Oxley.

"Wouldn't he though? Why he'd screw a bet out of a bishop."

"I'd do with him as Tomkinson did," said his lord-

ship; "he had him down at his lodge in Scotland, and bet him fifty pounds that he couldn't pass a week without a wager. Jack booked the bet and won it, and Tomkinson franked the company."

"What an artful villain my counterpart must be!" I said. I stared in the glass to see if I could discover the sheepishness they laid such stress on. I was pale, to be sure, and my hair a light brown, but so was Shelley's; indeed, there was a wild, but soft expression in my eyes that resembled his, and I could recognise many things in our natures that seemed to correspond. It was the poetic dreaminess, the lofty abstractedness from all the petty cares of every-day life, which vulgar people set down as simplicity; and thus,

The soaring thoughts that reached the stars,
Seemed ignorance to *them*.

As I uttered the consolatory lines, I felt two hands firmly pressed over my eyes, while a friendly voice called out, "Found out, old fellow! run fairly to earth!" "Ask him if he knows you," whispered another, but in a voice I could catch.

"Who am I, Jack?" cried the first speaker.

"Situating as I now am," I replied, "I am unable to pronounce; but of one thing I am assured — I am certain I am not called Jack."

The slow and measured intonation of my voice seemed to electrify them, for my captor relinquished his hold and fell back, while the two others, after a few seconds of blank surprise, burst into a roar of

laughter; a sentiment which the other could not refrain from, while he struggled to mutter some words of apology.

"Perhaps I can explain your mistake," I said blandly; "I am supposed to be extremely like the Prince of Salms Hökinshauven ——"

"No, no!" burst in Lord Keldrum, whose voice I recognised, "we never saw the prince. The blunder of the waiter led us into this embarrassment; we fancied you were ——"

"Mr. Burgoyne," I chimed in.

"Exactly; Jack Burgoyne; but you're not a bit like him."

"Strange, then; but I'm constantly mistaken for him; and when in London, I'm actually persecuted by people calling out, 'When did you come up, Jack?' 'Where do you hang out?' 'How long do you stay?' 'Dine with me to-day — to-morrow — Saturday?' and so on; and although, as I have remarked, these are only so many embarrassments for me, they all show how popular must be my prototype." I had purposely made this speech of mine a little long, for I saw by the disconcerted looks of the party that they did not see how to wind up "the situation," and, like all awkward men, I grew garrulous where I ought to have been silent. While I rambled on, Lord Keldrum exchanged a word or two with one of his friends; and, as I finished, he turned towards me, and with an air of much courtesy said,

"We owe you every apology for this intrusion, and hope you will pardon it; there is, however, but one way in which we can certainly feel assured that we have your forgiveness — that is, by your joining us. I see that your dinner is in preparation, so pray let me countermand it, and say that you are our guest."

"Lord Keldrum," said one of the party, presenting the speaker; "my name is Hammond, and this is Captain Oxley, Coldstream Guards."

I saw that this move required an exchange of ratifications, and so I bowed and said, "Algernon Sydney Potts."

"There are Staffordshire Pottses?"

"No relation," I said, stiffly. It was Hammond who made the remark, and with a sneering manner that I could not abide.

"Well, Mr. Potts, it is agreed," said Lord Keldrum, with his peculiar urbanity, "we shall see you at eight. No dressing. You'll find us in this fishing costume you see now."

I trust my reader, who has dined out any day he pleased and in any society he has liked these years past, will forgive me if I do not enter into any detailed account of my reasons for accepting this invitation. Enough if I freely own that to me, A. S. Potts, such an unexpected honour was about the same surprise as if I had been announced governor of a colony or bishop in a new settlement.

"At eight, sharp, Mr. Potts."

"The next door down the passage."

"Just as you are, remember!" were the three parting admonitions with which they left me.

CHAPTER III.

Who has not experienced the charm of the first time in his life, when totally removed from all the accidents of his station, the circumstance of his fortune, and his other belongings, he has taken his place amongst perfect strangers, and been estimated by the claims of his own individuality? Is it not this which gives the almost ecstasy of our first tour — our first journey? There are none to say, "Who is this Potts that gives himself these airs?" "What pretension has he to say this, or order that?" "What would old Peter say if he saw his son to-day?" with all the other "What has the world come to?" and "What are we to see next?" I say, it is with a glorious sense of independence that one sees himself emancipated from all these restraints, and recognises his freedom to be that which nature has made him.

As I sat on Lord Keldrum's left — Father Dyke was on his right — was I in any real quality other than I ever am? Was my nature different, my voice, my manner, my social tone, as I received all the bland attentions of my courteous host? And yet, in my heart of hearts, I felt that if it were known to that polite company I was the son of Peter Potts, 'pothecary, all my conversational courage would have failed me. I

would not have dared to assert fifty things I now declared, nor vouched for a hundred that I as assuredly guaranteed. If I had had to carry about me traditions of the shop in Mary's Abbey, the laboratory, and the rest of it, how could I have had the nerve to discuss any of the topics on which I now pronounced so authoritatively? And yet, these were all accidents of my existence — no more ME than was the colour of *his* whiskers mine who vaccinated me for cowpock. The man Potts was himself through all; he was neither compounded of senna and salts, nor amalgamated with sarsaparilla and the acids; but by the cruel laws of a harsh conventionality it was decreed otherwise, and the trade of the father descends to the son in every estimate of all he does, and says, and thinks. The converse of the proposition I was now to feel in the success I obtained in this company. I was, as the Germans would say, "Der Herr Potts SELBST, nicht nach seinen Begebenheiten" — the man Potts, not the creature of his belongings.

The man thus freed from his "antecedents," and owning no "relatives," feels like one to whom a great, a most unlimited credit has been opened, in matter of opinion. Not reduced to fashion his sentiments by some supposed standard becoming his station, he roams at will over the broad prairie of life, enough if he can show cause why he says this or thinks that, without having to defend himself for his parentage, and the place he was born in. Little wonder if, with such a sum to my credit, I drew largely on it; little wonder if

I were dogmatical and demonstrative; little wonder if, when my reason grew wearied with facts, I reposed on my imagination in fiction.

Be it remembered, however, that I only became what I have set down here after an excellent dinner, a considerable quantity of champagne, and no small share of claret, strong-bodied enough to please the priest. From the moment we sat down to table, I conceived for him a sort of distrust. He was painfully polite and civil; he had a soft, slippery, Clare accent; but there was a malicious twinkle in his eye that showed he was by nature satirical. Perhaps because we were more reading men than the others that it was we soon found ourselves pitted against each other in argument, and this not upon one, but upon every possible topic that turned up. Hammond, I found also, stood by the priest; Oxley was *my* backer; and his lordship played umpire. Dyke was a shrewd, sarcastic dog in his way, but he had no chance with me. How mercilessly I treated his church! — he pushed me to it — what an exposé did I make of the Pope and his government, with all their extortions and cruelties! how ruthlessly I showed them up as the sworn enemies of all freedom and enlightenment! The priest never got angry. He was too cunning for that, and he even laughed at some of my anecdotes, of which I related a great many.

“Don’t be so hard on him, Potts,” whispered my lord, as the day wore on; “he’s not one of us, you know!”

This speech put me into a flutter of delight. It was not alone that he called me Potts, but there was also an acceptance of me as one of his own set. We were, in fact, henceforth "nous autres." Enchanting recognition, never to be forgotten!

"But what would you do with us?" said Dyke, mildly remonstrating against some severe measures we of the landed interest might be yet driven to resort to.

"I don't know — that is to say — I have not made up my mind whether it were better to make a clearance of you altogether, or to bribe you."

"Bribe us by all means, then!" said he, with a most serious earnestness.

"Ah! but could we rely upon you?" I asked.

"That would greatly depend upon the price."

"I'll not haggle about terms, nor I'm sure would Keldrum," said I, nodding over to his lordship.

"You are only just to me, in that," said he, smiling.

"That's all fine talking for you fellows who had the luck to be first on the list, but what are poor devils like Oxley and myself to do?" said Hammond. "Taxation comes down to second sons."

"And the Times says that's all right," added Oxley.

"And I say it's all wrong; and I say more," I broke in: "I say that of all the tyrannies of Europe, I know of none like that newspaper. Why, sir, whose station, I would ask, now-a-days, can exempt him from its impertinent criticisms? Can Keldrum say — can I say —

that to-morrow or next day we shall not be arraigned for this, that, or t'other? I choose, for instance, to manage my estate — the property that has been in my family for centuries — the acres that have descended to us by grants as old as Magna Charta. I desire, for reasons that seem sufficient to myself, to convert arable into grass land. I say to one of my tenant farmers — it's Hedgeworth — no matter, I shall not mention names, but I say to him ——”

“I know the man,” broke in the priest; “you mean Hedgeworth Davis, of mount Davis.”

“No, sir, I do not,” said I, angrily, for I resented this attempt to run me to earth.

“Hedgeworth! Hedgeworth! It ain't that fellow that was in the Rifles; the 2nd battalion, is it?” said Oxley.

“I repeat,” said I, “that I will mention no names.”

“My mother had some relatives Hedgeworths, they were from Herefordshire. How odd, Potts, if we should turn out to be connexions! you said that these people were related to you.”

“I hope,” I said, angrily, “that I am not bound to give the birth, parentage, and education of every man whose name I may mention in conversation. At least, I would protest that I have not prepared myself for such a demand upon my memory.”

“Of course not, Potts. It would be a test no man could submit to,” said his lordship.

“That Hedgeworth, who was in the Rifles, exceeded all the fellows I ever met in drawing the long bow.

There was no country he had not been in, no army he had not served with; he was related to every celebrated man in Europe; and, after all, it turned out that his father was an attorney at Market Harborough, and subagent to one of our fellows who had some property there." This was said by Hammond, who directed the speech entirely to me.

"Confound the Hedgeworths, all together," Oxley broke in. "They have carried us miles away from what we were talking of."

This was a sentiment that met my heartiest concurrence, and I nodded in friendly recognition to the speaker, and drank off my glass to his health.

"Who can give us a song? I'll back his reverence here to be a vocalist," cried Hammond. And, sure enough, Dyke sang one of the national melodies with great feeling and taste. Oxley followed with something in less perfect taste, and we all grew very jolly. Then there came a broiled bone and some devilled kidneys, and a warm brew which Hammond himself concocted — a most insidious liquor, which had a strong odour of lemons, and was compounded, at the same time, of little else than rum and sugar.

There is an adage that says "*in vino veritas*," which I shrewdly suspect to be a great fallacy; at least, as regards my own case, I know it to be totally inapplicable. I am, in my sober hours — and I am proud to say that the exceptions from such are of the rarest — one of the most veracious of mortals; indeed, in my frank sincerity, I have often given offence to those

who like a courteous hypocrisy better than an ungraceful truth. Whenever, by any chance, it has been my illfortune to transgress these limits, there is no bound to my imagination. There is nothing too extravagant or too vainglorious for me to say of myself. All the strange incidents of romance that I have read, all the travellers' stories, newspaper accidents, adventures by sea and land, wonderful coincidences, unexpected turns of fortune, I adapt to myself, and coolly relate them as personal experiences. Listeners have afterwards told me that I possess an amount of consistence, a verisimilitude in these narratives perfectly marvellous, and only to be accounted for by supposing that I myself must, for the time being, be the dupe of my own imagination. Indeed, I am sure such must be the true explanation of this curious fact. How, in any other mode, explain the rash wagers, absurd and impossible engagements I have contracted in such moments, backing myself to leap twenty-three feet on the level sward; to dive in six fathoms water and fetch up Heaven knows what of shells and marine curiosities from the bottom; to ride the most unmanageable of horses, and, single-handed and unarmed, to fight the fiercest bulldog in England? Then, as to intellectual feats, what have I not engaged to perform? Sums of mental arithmetic; whole newspapers committed to memory after one reading; verse compositions, on any theme, in ten languages; and once, a written contract to compose a whole opera, with all the scores, within twenty-four hours. To a nature thus strangely constituted, wine

was a perfect magic wand, transforming a poor, weak, distrustful, modest man, into a hero; and yet, even with such temptations, my excesses were extremely rare and unfrequent. Are there many, I would ask, that could resist the passport to such a dreamland, with only the penalty of a headache the next morning? Some one would perhaps suggest that these were enjoyments to pay forfeit on. Well, so they were; but I must not anticipate. And now to my tale.

To Hammond's brew there succeeded one by Oxley, made after an American receipt, and certainly both fragrant and insinuating, and then came a concoction made by the priest, which he called "Father Hosey's pride." It was made in a bowl, and drunk out of lemon-rinds, ingeniously fitted into the wine-glasses. I remember no other particulars about it, though I can call to mind much of the conversation that preceded it. How I gave a long historical account of my family, that we came originally from Corsica, the name Potts being a corruption of Pozzo, and that we were of the same stock as the celebrated diplomatist Pozzo di Borgo. Our unclaimed estates in the island were of fabulous value, but in asserting my right to them I should accept thirteen mortal duels, the arrears of a hundred and odd years unscored off, in anticipation of which I had at one time taken lessons from Angelo in fencing, which led to the celebrated challenge they might have read in *Galvani*, where I offered to meet any swordsman in Europe for ten thousand Napoleons, giving choice of

the weapon to my adversary. With a tear to the memory of the poor French colonel that I killed at Sedan, I turned the conversation. Being in France, I incidentally mentioned some anecdotes of military life, and how I had invented the rifle called after Minié's name, and, in a moment of good nature, given that excellent fellow my secret.

"I will say," said I, "that Minié has shown more gratitude than some others nearer home, but we'll talk of rifled cannon another time."

In an episode about bear-shooting, I mentioned the Emperor of Russia, poor dear Nicholas, and told how we had once exchanged horses, mine being more strongboned, and a weight-carrier, his a light Caucasian mare, of purest breed, "the dam of that creature you may see below in the stable now," said I, carelessly. "'Come and see me one of these days, Potts,' said he, in parting; 'come and pass a week with me at Constantinople.' This was the first intimation he had ever given of his project against Turkey, and when I told it to the Duke of Wellington, his remark was a muttered 'Strange fellow, Potts — knows everything!' though he made no reply to me at the time."

It was somewhere about this period that the priest began with what struck me as an attempt to outdo me as a story-teller, an effort I should have treated with the most contemptuous indifference but for the amount of attention bestowed on him by the others. Nor was this all, but actually I perceived that a kind of rivalry

was attempted to be established, so that we were pitted directly against each other. Amongst the other self-delusions of such moments was the profound conviction I entertained that I was master of all games of skill and address, superior to Major A. at whist, and able to give Staunton a pawn and the move at chess. The priest was just as vainglorious. "He'd like to see the man who'd play him a game of 'spoiled five'" — whatever that was — "or drafts; ay, or, though it was not his pride, a bit of backgammon."

"Done, for fifty pounds; double on the gammon!" cried I.

"Fifty fiddlesticks!" cried he; "where would you or I find as many shillings?"

"What do you mean, sir?" said I, angrily. "Am I to suppose that you doubt my competence to risk such a contemptible sum, or is it to your own inability alone you would testify?"

A very acrimonious dispute followed, of which I have no clear recollection. I only remember how Hammond was out-and-out for the priest, and Oxley too tipsy to take *my* part with any efficiency. At last — how arranged I can't say — peace was restored, and the next thing I can recal was listening to Father Dyke giving a long, and of course a most fabulous, history of a ring that he wore on his second finger. It was given by the Pretender, he said, to his uncle, the celebrated Carmelite monk, Lawrence O'Kelly, who for years had followed the young prince's fortunes. It was an onyx, with the letters C. E. S.

engraved on it. Keldrum took an immense fancy to it; he protested that everything that attached to that unhappy family possessed in his eyes an uncommon interest. "If you have a fancy to take up Potts's wager," said he, laughingly, "I'll give you fifty pounds for your signet ring."

The priest demurred — Hammond interposed — then, there was more discussion, now warm, now jocose. Oxley tried to suggest something, which we all laughed at. Keldrum placed the backgammon board meanwhile, but I can give no clear account of what ensued, though I remember that the terms of our wager were committed to writing by Hammond, and signed by father D. and myself, and in the conditions there figured a certain ring, guaranteed to have belonged to, and been worn by, his Royal Highness Charles Edward, and a cream-coloured horse, equally guaranteed as the produce of a Caucasian mare presented by the late Emperor Nicholas to the present owner. The document was witnessed by all three, Oxley's name written in two letters, and a flourish.

After that, I played and lost!

CHAPTER IV.

I CAN recal to this very hour the sensations of headache and misery with which I awoke the morning after this debauch. Racking pain it was, with a sort of tremulous beating all through the brain, as though a small engine had been set to work there, and that piston, and boiler, and connecting rod were all banging, fizzing, and vibrating amid my fevered senses. I was, besides, much puzzled to know where I was, and how I had come there. Controversial divinity, genealogy, horse-racing, the peerage, and "double sixes" were dancing a wild cotillon through my brain; and although a waiter more than once cautiously obtruded his head into the room, to see if I were asleep, and as guardedly withdrew it again, I never had energy to speak to him, but lay passive and still, waiting till my mind might clear, and the cloud-fog that obscured my faculties might be wafted away.

At last — it was towards evening — the man, possibly becoming alarmed at my protracted lethargy, moved somewhat briskly through the room, and with that amount of noise that showed he meant to arouse me, disturbed chairs and fire-irons indiscriminately.

"Is it late or early?" asked I, faintly.

"'Tis near five, sir, and a beautiful evening," said

he, drawing nigh, with the air of one disposed for colloquy.

I didn't exactly like to ask where I was, and tried to ascertain the fact by a little circumlocution. "I suppose," said I, yawning, "for all that is to be done in a place like this, when up, one might just as well stay abed, eh?"

"'Tis the snuggest place anyhow," said he, with that peculiar disposition to agree with you so characteristic in an Irish waiter.

"No society?" sighed I.

"No, indeed, sir."

"No theatre?"

"Devil a one, sir."

"No sport?"

"Yesterday was the last of the season, sir; and signs on it, his lordship and the other gentlemen was off immediately after breakfast."

"You mean Lord — Lord ——" A mist was clearing slowly away, but I could not yet see clearly.

"Lord Keldrum, sir; a real gentleman every inch of him."

"Oh yes! to be sure — a very old friend of mine," muttered I. "And so he's gone, is he?"

"Yes, sir; and the last word he said was about your honour."

"About me — what was it?"

"Well, indeed, sir," replied the waiter, with a hesitating and confused manner, "I didn't rightly understand it; but as well as I could catch the words,

it was something about hoping your honour had more of that wonderful breed of horses the Emperor of Roossia gave you."

"Oh yes! I understand," said I, stopping him abruptly. "By the way, how is Blondel — that is, my horse — this morning?"

"Well, he looked fresh and hearty, when he went off this morning at daybreak ——"

"What do you mean?" cried I, jumping up in my bed. "Went off? where to?"

"— With Father Dyke on his back; and a neater hand he couldn't wish over him. 'Tim,' says he to the ostler, as he mounted, 'there's a five-shilling piece for you, for hansom, for I won this baste last night, and you must drink my health and wish me luck with him.'"

I heard no more, but sinking back into the bed, I covered my face with my hands, overcome with shame and misery. All the mists that had blurred my faculties had now been swept clean away, and the whole history of the previous evening was revealed before me. My stupid folly, my absurd boastfulness, my egregious story-telling — not to call it worse — were all there; but, shall I acknowledge it? what pained me not less poignantly was the fact that I ventured to stake the horse I had merely hired, and actually lost him at the play-table.

As soon as I rallied from this state of self-accusation, I set to work to think how I should manage to repossess myself of my beast, my loss of which might

be converted into a felony. To follow the priest and ransom Blondel was my first care. Father Dyke would most probably not exact an unreasonable price; he, of course, never believed one word of my nonsensical narrative about Schamyl and the Caucasus, and he'd not revenge upon Potts sober the follies of Potts tipsy. It is true my purse was a very slender one, but Blondel, to any one unacquainted with his pedigree, could not be a costly animal; fifteen pounds — twenty, certainly — ought to buy what the priest would call "every hair on his tail."

It was now too late in the evening to proceed to execute the measures I had resolved on, and so I determined to lie still and ponder over them. Dismissing the waiter, with an order to bring me a cup of tea about eight o'clock, I resumed my cogitations. They were not pleasant ones: Potts a byword for the most outrageous and incoherent balderdash and untruth — Potts in the Hue and Cry — Potts in the dock — Potts in the pillory — Potts paragraphed in Punch — portrait of Potts, price one penny! — these were only a few of the forms in which the descendant of the famous Corsican family of Pozzo di Borgo now presented himself to my imagination.

The courts and quadrangles of Old Trinity ringing with laughter, the coarse exaggerations of tasteless scoffers, the jokes and sneers of stupidity, malice, and all uncharitableness, rang in my ears as if I heard them. All possible and impossible versions of the incident passed in review before me: my father, driven

distracted by impertinent inquiries, cutting me off with a shilling, and then dying of mortification and chagrin — rewards offered for my apprehension — descriptions, not in any way flatteries, of my personal appearance — paragraphs of local papers hinting that the notorious Potts was supposed to have been seen in our neighbourhood yesterday, with sly suggestions about looking after stable doors, &c. I could bear it no longer. I jumped up, and rang the bell violently.

"You know this Father Dyke, waiter? In what part of the country does he live?"

"He's parish priest of Inistioge," said he; "the snuggest place in the whole county."

"How far from this may it be?"

"It's a matter of five-and-forty miles; and by the same token, he said he'd not draw bridle till he got home to-night, for there was a fair at Grague to-morrow, and if he wasn't pleased with the baste he'd sell him there."

I groaned deeply, for here was a new complication, entirely unlooked for. "You can't possibly mean," gasped I out, "that a respectable clergyman would expose for sale a horse lent to him casually by a friend?" for the thought struck me that this protest of mine should be thus early on record.

The waiter scratched his head and looked confused. Whether another version of the event possessed him, or that my question staggered his convictions, I am unable to say, but he made no reply. "It is true," continued I, in the same strain, "that I met his re-

verence last night for the first time. My friend Lord Keldrum made us acquainted; but seeing him received at my noble friend's board, I naturally felt, and said to myself, 'The man Keldrum admits to his table is the equal of any one.' Could anything be more reasonable than that?"

"No, indeed, sir; nothing," said the waiter, obsequiously.

"Well, then," resumed I, "some day or other it may chance that you will be called on to remember and recal this conversation between us; if so, it will be important that you should have a clear and distinct memory of the fact, that when I awoke in the morning, and asked for my horse, the answer you made me was — What was the answer you made me?"

"The answer I med was this," said the fellow, sturdily, and with an effrontery I can never forget — "the answer I med was, that the man that won him took him away."

"You're an insolent scoundrel," cried I, boiling over with passion, "and if you don't ask pardon for this outrage on your knees, I'll include you in the indictment for conspiracy."

So far from proceeding to the penitential act I proposed, the fellow grinned from ear to ear, and left the room. It was a long time before I could recover my wonted calm and composure. That this rascal's evidence would be fatal to me if the question ever came to trial, was as clear as noonday; not less clear was it that he knew this himself.

"I must go back at once to town," thought I. "I will surrender myself to the law. If a compromise be impossible, I will perish at the stake."

I forgot there was no stake, but there was wool-carding, and oakum-picking, and wheel-treading, and oyster-shell pounding, and other small plays of this nature, infinitely more degrading to humanity than all the cruelties of our barbarous ancestors.

Now, in no record of lives of adventure had I met any account of such trials as these. The Silvio Pellicos of Pentonville are yet unwritten martyrs. Prison discipline would vulgarise the grandest epic that ever was conceived. "Anything rather than this," said I, aloud. "Proscribed, outlawed, hunted down, but never, grey-coated and hair-clipped, shall a Potts be sentenced to the 'crank,' or black-holed as refractory! — Bring me my bill," cried I, in a voice of indignant anger. "I will go forth into the world of darkness and tempest — I will meet the storm and the hurricane; better all the conflict of the elements than man's — than man's —" I wasn't exactly sure what, but there was no need of the word, for a gust of wind had just flattened my umbrella in my face as I issued forth, and left me breathless, as the door closed behind me.

CHAPTER V.

As I walked onward against the swooping wind and the plashing rain, I felt a sort of heroic ardour in the notion of breasting the adverse waves of life so boldly. It is not every fellow could do this: throw his knapsack on his shoulder, seize his stick, and set out in storm and blackness. No, Potts, my man; for downright inflexibility of purpose, for bold and resolute action, you need yield to none! It was, indeed, an awful night; the thunder rolled and crashed with scarce an interval of cessation; forked lightning tore across the sky in every direction; while the wind swept through the deep glen, smashing branches and uplifting large trees like mere shrubs. I was soon completely drenched, and my soaked clothes hung around with the weight of lead; my spirits, however, sustained me, and I toiled along, occasionally in a sort of wild bravado, giving a cheer as the thunder rolled close above my head, and trying to sing, as though my heart were as gay and my spirits as light as in an hour of happiest abandonment.

Jean Paul has somewhere the theory that our Good Genius is attached to us from our birth by a film fine as gossamer, and which few of us escape rupturing in the first years of youth, thus throwing ourselves at

once without chart or pilot upon the broad ocean of life. He, however, more happily constituted, who feels the guidance of his guardian spirit, recognises the benefits of its care, and the admonitions of its wisdom, *he* is destined to great things. Such men discover new worlds beyond the seas, carry conquest over millions, found dynasties, and build up empires; they whom the world regard as demigods having simply the wisdom of being led by fortune, and not severing the slender thread that unites them to their destiny. Was I, Potts, in this glorious category? Had the lesson of the great moralist been such a warning to me that I had preserved the filmy link unbroken? I really began to think so; a certain impulse, a whispering voice within, that said, "Go on!" On, ever onward! seemed to be the accents of that Fate, which had great things in store for me, and would eventually make me illustrious.

No illusions of your own, Potts, no phantasmagoria of your own poor heated fancy, must wile you away from the great and noble part destined for you. No weakness, no faintheartedness, no shrinking from toil, nor even peril. Work hard to know thoroughly for what Fate intends you; read your credentials well, and then go to your post unflinchingly. Revolving this theory of mine, I walked ever on. It opened a wide field, and my imagination disported in it, as might a wild mustang over some vast prairie. The more I thought over it, the more did it seem to me the real embodiment of that superstition which extends to every

land and every family of men. We are Lucky when, submitting to our Good Genius, we suffer ourselves to be led along unresistingly; we are Unlucky when, breaking our frail bonds, we encounter life unguided and unaided.

What a docile, obedient, and believing pupil did I pledge myself to be. Fate should see that she had no refractory nor rebellious spirit in me, no self-indulgent voluptuary, seeking only the sunny side of existence, but a nature ready to confront the rugged conflict of life, and to meet its hardships, if such were my allotted path.

I applied the circumstances in which I then found myself to my theory, and met no difficulty in the adaptation. Blondel was to perform a great part in my future. Blondel was a symbol selected by fate to indicate a certain direction. Blondel was a lamp by which I could find my way in the dark paths of the world. With Blondel, my Good Genius would walk beside me, or occasionally get up on the crupper, but never leave me or desert me. In the high excitement of my mind, I felt no sense of bodily fatigue, but walked on, drenched to the skin, alternately shivering with cold or burning with all the intensity of fever. In this state was it that I entered the little inn of Ovoco soon after daybreak, and stood dripping in the bar, a sad spectacle of exhaustion and excitement. My first question was, "Has Blondel been here?" and before they could reply, I went on with all the rapidity of delirium to assure them that deception of me would

be fruitless; that Fate and I understood each other thoroughly, travelled together on the best of terms, never disagreed about anything, but, by a mutual system of give and take, hit it off like brothers. I talked for an hour in this strain, and then my poor faculties, long struggling and sore pushed, gave way completely, and I fell into brain fever.

I chanced upon kind and good-hearted folk, who nursed me with care and watched me with interest; but my illness was a severe one, and it was only in the sixth week that I could be about again, a poor, weak, emaciated creature, with failing limbs and shattered nerves. There is an indescribable sense of weariness in the mind after fever, just as if the brain had been enormously overtaxed and exerted, and that in the pursuit of all the wild and fleeting fancies of delirium it had travelled over miles and miles of space. To the depressing influence of this sensation is added the difficulty of disentangling the capricious illusions of the sick-bed from the actual facts of life; and in this maze of confusion my first days of convalescence were passed. Blondel was my great puzzle. Was he a reality, or a mere creature of imagination? Had I really ridden him as a horse, or only as an idea? Was he a quadruped with mane and tail, or an allegory invented to typify destiny? I cannot say what hours of painful brain labour this inquiry cost me, and what intense research into myself. Strange enough, too, though I came out of the investigation convinced of his equine existence, I arrived at the conclusion that he was a "horse and

something more." Not that I am able to explain myself more fully on that head, though, if I were writing this portion of my memoirs in German, I suspect I could convey enough of my meaning to give a bad headache to any one indulgent enough to follow me.

I set out once more upon my pilgrimage on a fine day of June, my steps directed to the village of Inistioge, where Father Dyke resided. I was too weak for much exertion, and it was only after five days of the road I reached at nightfall the little glen in which the village stood. The moon was up, streaking the wide market-places with long lines of yellow light between the rows of tall elm-trees, and tipping with silvery sheen the bright eddies of the beautiful river that rolled beside it. Over the granite cliffs that margined the stream, laurel, and arbutus, and wild holly clustered in wild luxuriance, backed higher up again by tall pine-trees, whose leafy summits stood out against the sky; and lastly, deep within a waving meadow, stood an old ruined abbey, whose traceried window was now softly touched by the moonlight. All was still and silent, except the rush of the rapid river, as I sat down upon a stone bench to enjoy the scene and luxuriate in its tranquil serenity. I had not believed Ireland contained such a spot, for there was all the trim neatness and careful propriety of an English village, with that luxuriance of verdure and wild beauty so eminently Irish. How was it that I had never heard of it before? Were others aware of it, or was the discovery strictly my own? Or can it possibly be that all

this picturesque loveliness is but the effect of a mellow moon? While I thus questioned myself, I heard the sound of a quick footstep rapidly approaching, and soon afterwards the pleasant tone of a rich voice humming an opera air. I arose, and saw a tall, athletic-looking figure, with rod and fishing-basket, approaching me.

"May I ask you, sir," said I, addressing him, "if this village contains an inn?"

"There is, or rather there was, a sort of inn here," said he, removing his cigar as he spoke; "but the place is so little visited, that I fancy the landlord found it would not answer, and so it is closed at this moment."

"But do visitors — tourists — never pass this way?"

"Yes; and a few salmon-fishers, like myself, come occasionally in the season; but then we dispose ourselves in little lodgings, here and there, some of us with the farmers, one or two of us with the priest."

"Father Dyke?" broke I in.

"Yes; you know him, perhaps?"

"I have heard of him, and met him, indeed," added I, after a pause. "Where may his house be?"

"The prettiest spot in the whole glen. If you'd like to see it in this picturesque moonlight, come along with me."

I accepted the invitation at once, and we walked on together. The easy, half-careless tone of the stranger, the loose, lounging stride of his walk, and a

certain something in his mellow voice, seemed to indicate one of those natures which, so to say, take the world well — temperaments that reveal themselves almost immediately. He talked away about fishing, as he went, and appeared to take a deep interest in the sport, not heeding much the ignorance I betrayed on the subject, nor my ignoble confession that I had never adventured upon anything higher than a worm and a quill.

"I'm sure," said he, laughingly, "Tom Dyke never encouraged you in such sporting tackle, glorious fly-fisher as he is."

"You forget, perhaps," replied I, "that I scarcely have any acquaintance with him. We met once only, at a dinner party."

"He's a pleasant fellow," resumed he; "devilish wide-awake, one must say; up to most things in this same world of ours."

"That much, my own brief experience of him can confirm," said I, dryly, for the remark rather jarred upon my feelings.

"Yes," said he, as though following out his own train of thought. "Old Tom is not a bird to be snared with coarse lines. The man must be an early riser that catches him napping."

I cannot describe how all this irritated me. It sounded like so much direct sarcasm upon my weakness and want of acuteness.

"There's the 'Rosary;' that's his cottage," said he, taking my arm, while he pointed upward to a little

jutting promontory of rock over the river, surmounted by a little thatched cottage almost embowered in roses and honeysuckles. So completely did it occupy the narrow limits of ground, that the windows projected actually over the stream, and the creeping plants that twined through the little balconies hung in tangled masses over the water. "Search where you will through the Scottish and Cumberland scenery, I defy you to match that," said my companion; "not to say that you can hook a four-pound fish from that little balcony on any summer evening while you smoke your cigar."

"It is a lovely spot, indeed," said I, inhaling with ecstasy the delicious perfume which, in the calm night air, seemed to linger in the atmosphere.

"He tells me," continued my companion — "and I take his word for it, for I am no florist — that there are seventy varieties of the rose on and around that cottage. I can answer for it, that you can't open a window without a great mass of flowers coming, in showers, over you. I told him, frankly, that if I were his tenant for longer than the fishing season, I'd clear half of them away."

"You live there, then?" asked I, timidly.

"Yes; I rent the cottage, all but two rooms, which he wished to keep for himself, but which he now writes me word may be let, for this month and the next, if a tenant offer. Would you like them?" asked he, abruptly.

"Of all things — that is — I think so — I should

like to see them first!" muttered I, half startled by the suddenness of the question.

"Nothing easier," said he, opening a little wicket as he spoke, and beginning to ascend a flight of narrow steps cut in the solid rock. "This is a path of my designing," continued he, "the regular approach is on the other side; but this saves fully half a mile of road, though it be a little steep."

As I followed him up the ascent, I proposed to myself a variety of questions, such as, where and how I was to procure accommodation for the night, and in what manner to obtain something to eat, of which I stood much in need? and I had gained a little flower-garden at the rear of the cottage before I could resolve any of these difficult points.

"Here we are," said he, drawing a long breath. "You can't see much of the view at this hour; but to-morrow, when you stand on this spot, and look down that reach of the river, with Mont Alto in the background, you'll tell me if you know anything finer!"

"Is that Edward?" cried a soft voice; and at the same instant a young girl came hastily out of the cottage, and throwing her arms around my companion exclaimed, "How you have alarmed me! What could possibly have kept you out so late?"

"A broad-shouldered fish, a fellow weighing twelve pounds at the very least, and who, after nigh three hours' playing, got among the rocks, and smashed my tackle."

"And you lost him?"

"That did I, and some twenty yards of gut, and the top splice of my best rod, and my temper besides. But I'm forgetting: Mary, here is a gentleman who will, I hope, not refuse to join us at supper. — My sister."

By the manner of presentation, it was clear that he expected to hear my name, and so I interposed, "Mr. Potts — Algernon Sydney Potts."

The young lady curtseyed slightly, muttered something like a repetition of the invitation, and led the way into the cottage.

My astonishment was great at the "interior" now before me, for though all the arrangements bespoke habits of comfort and even luxury, there was a studious observance of cottage style in everything, the bookshelves, the tables, the very pianoforte, being all made of white unvarnished wood; and I now perceived that the young lady herself, with a charming coquetry, had assumed something of the costume of the Oberland, and wore her bodice laced in front, and covered with silver embroidery both tasteful and becoming.

"My name is Crofton," said my host, as he disengaged himself of his basket and tackle; "we are almost as much strangers here as yourself. I came here for the fishing, and mean to take myself off when it's over."

"I hope not, Edward," broke in the girl, who was now, with the assistance of a servant woman, preparing

the table for supper; "I hope you'll stay till we see the autumn tints on those trees."

"My sister is just as great an enthusiast about sketching as I am for salmon-fishing," said he, laughingly; "and for my own part, I like scenery and landscape very well, but think them marvellously heightened by something like sport. Are you an angler?"

"No," said I; "I know nothing of the gentle craft."

"Fond of shooting, perhaps? Some men think the two sports incompatible."

"I am as inexpert with the gun as the rod," said I, diffidently.

I perceived that the sister gave a sly look under her long eyelashes towards me, but what its meaning I could not well discover. Was it depreciation of a man who avowed himself unacquainted with the sports of the field, or was it a quiet recognition of claims more worthy of regard? At all events, I perceived that she had very soft, gentle-looking grey eyes, a very fair skin, and a profusion of beautiful brown hair. I had not thought her pretty at first. I now saw that she was extremely pretty, and her figure, though slightly given to fulness, the perfection of grace.

Hungry, almost famished as I was, with a fast of twelve hours, I felt no impatience so long as she moved about in preparation for the meal. How she disposed the little table equipage, the careful solicitude with which she arranged the fruit and the flowers — not always satisfied with her first dispositions, but

changing them for something different — all interested me vastly, and when at last we were summoned to table, I actually felt sorry and disappointed.

Was it really so delicious, was the cookery so exquisite? I own frankly that I am not a trustworthy witness, but if my oath could be taken, I am willing to swear that I believe there never were such salmon steaks, such a pigeon-pie, and such a damson-tart served to mortals as these. My enthusiasm, I suspect, must have betrayed itself in some outward manifestation, for I remember Crofton laughingly having remarked,

“You will turn my sister’s head, Mr. Potts, by such flatteries; all the more, since her cookery is self-taught.”

“Don’t believe him, Mr. Potts; I have studied all the great masters of the art, and you shall have an omelette to-morrow for breakfast, Brillat Savarin himself would not despise.”

I blushed at the offer of an hospitality so neatly and delicately insinuated, and had really no words to acknowledge it, nor was my confusion unfavourably judged by my hosts. Crofton marked it quickly, and said,

“Yes, Mr. Potts, and I’ll teach you to hook a trout afterwards. Meanwhile, let us have a glass of Sauterne together; we drink it out of green glasses, to cheat ourselves into the fancy that it’s Rhenish.”

“‘Am Rhein, am Rhein, da wachsen unsere Reben,’” said I, quoting the students’ song.

"Oh, have you been in Germany?" cried she, eagerly.

"Alas! no," said I. "I have never travelled." I thought she looked disappointed as I said this. Indeed, I already wished it unsaid, but her brother broke in with,

"We are regular vagabonds, Mr. Potts. My sister and myself have had a restless paroxysm for the last three years of life, and what with seeking cool spots for the summer and hot climates for winter, we are scarcely ever off the road."

"Like the gentleman, I suppose, who ate oysters for appetite, but carried his system so far as to induce indigestion." My joke failed; nobody laughed, and I was overwhelmed with confusion, which I was fain to bury in my strawberries and cream.

"Let us have a little music, Mary," said Crofton. "Do you play, or sing, Mr. Potts?"

"Neither. I do nothing," cried I, in despair. "As Sydney Smith says, 'I know something about the Romans,' but, for any gift or grace which could adorn society, or make time pass more pleasantly, I am an utter bankrupt."

The young girl had, while I was speaking, taken her place at the pianoforte, and was half listlessly suffering her hands to fall in chords over the instrument.

"Come out upon this terrace, here," cried Crofton to me, "and we'll have our cigar. What I call a

regular luxury after a hard day is to lounge out here in the cool night air, and enjoy one's weed while listening to Spohr or Beethoven."

It was really delightful. The bright stars were all reflected in the calm river down below, and a thousand odours floated softly on the air as we sat there.

Are there not in every man's experience short periods in which he seemed to have lived longer than during whole years of life? They tell us there are certain conditions of the atmosphere, inappreciable as to the qualities, which seem to ripen wines, imparting to young fresh vintages all the mellow richness of age, all the depth of flavour, all the velvety softness of time. May there not possibly be influences which similarly affect our natures? May there not be seasons in which changes as great as these are wrought within us? I firmly believe it, and as firmly that such a period was that in which I sat on the balcony over the Nore, listening to Mary Crofton as she sang, but just as often lost to every sound, and deep in a heaven of blended enjoyments, of which no one ingredient was in the ascendant. Starry sky, rippling river, murmuring night winds, perfumed air, floating music, all mingling as do the odours of an incense, and, like an incense, filling the brain with a delicious intoxication.

Hour after hour must have passed with me in this half-conscious ecstasy, for Crofton at last said,

"There, where you see that pinkish tint through the grey, that's the sign of breaking day, and the signal for bedtime. Shall I show you your room?"

"How I wish this could last for ever!" cried I, rapturously; and then, half ashamed of my warmth, I stammered out a good night, and retired.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR life at the Rosary — for it was *our* life now of which I have to speak — was one of unbroken enjoyment. On fine days we fished, that is, Crofton did, and I loitered along some river's bank till I found a quiet spot to plant my rod, and stretch myself on the grass, now reading, oftener dreaming, such glorious dreams as only come in the leafy shading of summer time, to a mind enraptured with all around it. The lovely scenery and the perfect solitude of the spot ministered well to my fanciful mood, and left me free to weave the most glittering web of incident for my future. So utterly was all the past blotted from my memory, that I recalled nothing of existence more remote than my first evening at the cottage. If for a passing instant a thought of bygones would obtrude, I hastened to escape from it as from a gloomy reminiscence. I turned away as would a dreamer who dreaded to awaken out of some delicious vision, and who would not face the dull aspect of reality. Three weeks thus glided by of such happiness as I can scarcely yet recal without emotion! The Croftons had come to treat me like a brother; they spoke of family events in all freedom before me; talked of the most confidential things in my presence, and discussed their future plans and

their means as freely in my hearing as though I had been kith and kin with them. I learned that they were orphans, educated and brought up by a rich, eccentric uncle, who lived in a sort of costly seclusion in one of the Cumberland dales: Edward, who had served in the army, and been wounded in an Indian campaign, had given up the service in a fit of impatience at being passed over in promotion. His uncle resented the rash step by withdrawing the liberal allowance he had usually made him, and they quarrelled. Mary Crofton, espousing her brother's side, quitted her guardian's roof to join his, and thus had they rambled about the world for two or three years, on means scanty enough, but still sufficient to provide for those who neither sought to enter society nor partake of its pleasures.

As I advanced in the intimacy, I became depository of the secrets of each. Edward's was the sorrow he felt for having involved his sister in his own ruin, and been the means of separating her from one so well able and so willing to befriend her. Hers was the more bitter thought that their narrow means should prejudice her brother's chances of recovery, for his chest had shown symptoms of dangerous disease, requiring all that climate and consummate care might do to overcome. Preyed on incessantly by this reflection, unable to banish it, equally unable to resist its force, she took the first and only step she had ever ventured without his knowledge, and written to her uncle a long letter of explanations and entreaty.

I saw the letter; I read it carefully. It was all

that sisterly love and affection could dictate, accompanied by a sense of dignity, that if her appeal should be unsuccessful, no slight should be passed upon her brother, who was unaware of the step thus taken. To express this sufficiently, she was driven to the acknowledgment that Edward would never have himself stooped to the appeal; and so careful was she of his honour in this respect, that she repeated — with what appeared to me unnecessary insistence — that the request should be regarded as hers, and hers only. In fact, this was the uppermost sentiment in the whole epistle. I ventured to say as much; and endeavoured to induce her to moderate in some degree the amount of this pretension; but she resisted firmly and decidedly. Now, I have recorded this circumstance here — less for itself than to mention how by its means this little controversy led to a great intimacy between us — inducing us, while defending our separate views, to discuss each other's motives, and even characters, with the widest freedom. I called her enthusiast, and in return she styled me worldly and calculating; and, indeed, I tried to seem so, and fortified my opinions by prudential maxims and severe reflections I should have been sorely indisposed to adopt in my own case. I believe she saw all this. I am sure she read me aright, and perceived that I was arguing against my own convictions. At all events, day after day went over, and no answer came to the letter. I used to go each morning to the post in the village to inquire, but

always returned with the same disheartening tidings, "Nothing to-day!"

One of these mornings it was, that I was returning disconsolately from the village, Crofton, whom I believed at the time miles away on the mountains, overtook me. He came up from behind, and passing his arm within mine, walked on some minutes without speaking. I saw plainly there was something on his mind, and I half dreaded lest he might have discovered his sister's secret, and have disapproved of my share in it.

"Algy," said he, calling me by my Christian name, which he very rarely did, "I have something to say to you. Can I be quite certain that you'll take my frankness in good part?"

"You can," I said, with a great effort to seem calm and assured.

"You give me your word upon it?"

"I do," said I, trying to appear bold; "and my hand be witness of it."

"Well," he resumed, drawing a long breath, "here it is: I have remarked that for above a week back you have never waited for the postboy's return to the cottage, but always have come down to the village yourself."

I nodded assent, but said nothing.

"I have remarked, besides," said he, "that, when told at the office there was no letter for you, you came away sad-looking and fretted, scarcely spoke for

some time, and seemed altogether downcast and depressed."

"I don't deny it," I said, calmly.

"Well," continued he, "some old experiences of mine have taught me that this sort of anxiety has generally but one source, with fellows of *our* age, and which simply means that the remittance we have counted upon as certain, has been, from some cause or other, delayed. Isn't that the truth?"

"No," said I joyfully, for I was greatly relieved by his words; "no, on my honour, nothing of the kind."

"I may not have hit the thing exactly," said he, hurriedly, "but I'll be sworn it is a money matter, and if a couple of hundred pounds be of the least service —"

"My dear, kind-hearted fellow," I broke in, "I can't endure this longer; it is no question of money; it is nothing that affects my means, though I half wish it were, to show you how cheerfully I could owe you my escape from a difficulty — not, indeed, that I need another tie to bind me to you —" But I could say no more, for my eyes were swimming over, and my lips trembling.

"Then," cried he, "I have only to ask pardon for thus obtruding upon your confidence."

I was too full of emotion to do more than squeeze his hand affectionately, and thus we walked along, side by side, neither uttering a word. At last, and as it were with an effort, by a bold transition to carry

our thoughts into another and very different channel, he said, "Here's a letter from old Dyke, our landlord. The worthy father has been enjoying himself in a tour of English watering places, and has now started for a few weeks up the Rhine. His account of his holiday, as he calls it, is amusing; nor less so is the financial accident to which he owes the excursion. Take it, and read it," he added, giving me the epistle. "If the style be the man, his reverence is not difficult to decipher."

I bestowed little attention on this speech, uttered, as I perceived, rather from the impulse of starting a new topic than anything else, and taking the letter half mechanically, I thrust it in my pocket. One or two efforts we made at conversation were equally failures, and it was a relief to me when Crofton, suddenly remembering some night-lines he had laid in a mountain lake a few miles off, hastily shook my hand, and said, "Good-by till dinner-time."

When I reached the cottage, instead of entering, I strolled into the garden, and sought out a little summer-house of sweetbriar and honeysuckle, on the edge of the river. Some strange, vague impression was on me, that I needed time and place to commune with myself and be alone; that a large unsettled account lay between me and my conscience, which could not be longer deferred; but, of what nature, how originating, and how tending, I know nothing whatever.

I resolved to submit myself to a searching examination, to ascertain what I might about myself. In

my favourite German authors I had frequently read that men's failures in life were chiefly owing to neglect of this habit of self-investigation; that though we calculate well the dangers and difficulties of an enterprise, we omit the more important estimate of what may be our own capacity to effect an object, what are our resources, wherein our deficiencies.

"Now for it," I thought, as I entered the little arbour — "now for it, Potts; kiss the book, and tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

As I said this, I took off my hat and bowed respectfully around to the members of an imaginary court. "My name," said I, in a clear and respectful voice, "is Algernon Sydney Potts. If I be pushed to the avowal, I am sorry it *is* Potts! Algernon Sydney do a deal, but they can't do everything — not to say that captious folk see a certain bathos in the collocation with my surname. Can a man hope to make such a name illustrious? Can he aspire to the notion of a time when people will allude to the great Potts, the celebrated Potts, the immortal Potts?" I grew very red, I felt my cheek on fire as I uttered this, and I suddenly bethought me of Mr. Pitt, and I said aloud, "And, if Pitt, why not Potts?" That was a most healing recollection. I revelled in it for a long time. "How true is it," I continued, "that the halo of greatness illumines all within its circle, and the man is merged in the grandeur of his achievements. The men who start in life with high-sounding designations have but to fill a foregone pledge — to pay the bill that

Fortune has endorsed. Not so was our case, Pitt. To us is it to lay every foundation-stone of our future greatness. There was nothing in *your* surname to foretel you would be a Minister of State at one-and-thirty — there is no letter in *mine* to indicate that I shall be. But what is it that I am to be? Is it Poet, Philosopher, Politician, Soldier, or Discoverer? Am I to be great in Art, or illustrious in Letters? Is there to be an ice tract of Behring's Straits called Potts's Point, or a planet styled Pottsium Sidus? And when centuries have rolled over, will historians have their difficulty about the first Potts, and what his opinions were on this subject or that?"

Then came a low soft sound of half-suppressed laughter, and then the rustle of a muslin dress hastily brushing through the trees. I rushed out from my retreat, and hurried down the walk. No one to be seen — not a soul; not a sound, either, to be heard.

"No use hiding, Mary," I called out, "I saw you all the time; my mock confession was got up merely to amuse you. Come out boldly and laugh as long as you will." No answer. This refusal amazed me. It was like a disbelief in my assertion. "Come, come!" I cried, "you can't pretend to think I was serious in all this vainglorious nonsense. Come, Mary, and let us enjoy the laugh at it together. If you don't, I shall be angry. I'll take it ill — very ill."

Still no reply. Could I, then, have been deceived? Was it a mere delusion? But no; I heard the low laugh, and the rustle of the dress, and the quick tread

upon the gravel, too plainly for any mistake, and so I returned to the cottage in chagrin and ill-temper. As I passed the open windows of the little drawing-room I saw Mary seated at her work, with, as was her custom, an open book on a little table beside her. Absorbed as she was, she did not lift her head, nor notice my approach till I entered the room.

"You have no letter for me?" she cried, in a voice of sorrowful meaning.

"None," said I, scrutinising her closely, and sorely puzzled what to make of her calm deportment. "Have you been out in the garden this morning?" I asked, abruptly.

"No," said she, frankly.

"Not quitted the house at all?"

"No. Why do you ask?" cried she, in some surprise.

"I'll tell you," I said, sitting down at her side, and speaking in a low and confidential tone; "a strange thing has just happened to me." And with that I narrated the incident, glossing over, as best I might, the absurdity of my soliloquising, and the nature of the self-examination I was engaged in. Without waiting for me to finish, she broke in suddenly with a low laugh, and said,

"It must have been Rose."

"And who is Rose?" I asked, half sternly.

"A cousin of ours, a mere school-girl, who has just arrived. She came by the mail this morning, when you were out. But here she is, coming up the walk.

Just step behind that screen, and you shall have your revenge. I'll make her tell everything."

I had barely time to conceal myself, when, with a merry laugh, a fresh, girlish voice called out, "I've seen him! I have seen him, Mary! I was sitting on the rock beside the river, when he came into the summer-house, and, fancying himself alone and unseen, proceeded to make his confession to himself."

"His confession! What do you mean?"

"I don't exactly know whether that be the proper name for it, but it was a sort of self-examination, not very painful, certainly, inasmuch as it was rather flattering than otherwise."

"I really cannot understand you, Rose."

"I'm not surprised," said she, laughing again. "It was some time before I could satisfy myself that he was not talking to somebody else, or reading out of a book, and when, peeping through the leaves, I perceived he was quite alone, I almost screamed out with laughing."

"But why, child? What was the absurdity that amused you?"

"Fancy the creature. I need not describe him, Molly. You know him well, with his great staring light-green eyes, and his wild yellow hair. Imagine his walking madly to and fro, tossing his long arms about in uncouth gestures, while he asked himself seriously whether he wouldn't be Shakespeare, or Milton, or Michael Angelo, or Nelson. Fancy his gravely inquiring of himself what remarkable qualities

predominated in his nature: was he more of a sculptor, or a politician, or had fate destined him to discover new worlds, or to conquer the old ones? If I hadn't been actually listening to the creature, and occasionally looking at him, too, I'd have doubted my senses. Oh, dear! shall I ever forget the earnest absurdity of his manner as he said something about the 'immortal Potts.' "

The reminiscence was too much for her, for she threw herself on a sofa, and laughed immoderately. As for me, unable to endure more, and fearful that Mary might finish by discovering me, I stole from the room, and rushed out into the wood.

What is it that renders ridicule more insupportable than vituperation? Why is the violence of passion itself more easy to endure than the sting of sarcastic satire? What weak spot in our nature does this peculiar passion assail? And again, why are all the noble aspirations of high-hearted enthusiasm, the grand self-reliance of daring minds, ever to be made the theme of such scoffings? Have the scorers never read of Wolfe, of Murat, or of Nelson? Has not a more familiar instance reached them of one who foretold to an unwilling senate the time when they would hang in expectancy on his words, and treasure them as wisdom? Cruel, narrow-minded, and unjust world, with whom nothing succeeds except success!

The man who contracts a debt is never called cheat till his inability to discharge it has been proven clearly and beyond a doubt; but he who enters into an engage-

ment with his own heart to gain a certain prize, or reach a certain goal, is made a mockery and a sneer by all whose own humble faculties represent such striving as impossible. From thoughts like these I went on to speculate whether I should ever be able, in the zenith of my great success, to forgive those captious and disparaging critics who had once endeavoured to damp my ardour and bar my career. I own I found it exceedingly difficult to be generous, and in particular to that young minx of sixteen who had dared to make a jest of my pretensions.

I wandered along thus for hours. Many a grassy path of even sward led through the forest, and taking one of those which skirted the stream, I strolled along, unconscious alike of time and place. Out of the purely personal interests which occupied my mind sprang others, and I bethought me with a grim satisfaction of the severe lesson Mary must have, ere this, read Rose upon her presumption and her flippancy, telling her, in stern accents, how behind that screen the man was standing she had dared to make the subject of her laughter. Oh, how she blushes! what flush of crimson shame spreads over her face, her temples, and her neck; what large tears overflow her lids, and fall along her cheeks. I actually pity her suffering, and am pained at her grief.

"Spare her, dear Mary!" I cry out; "after all, she is but a child. Why blame her that she cannot measure greatness, as philosophers measure mountains, by the shadow?"

Egotism, in every one of its moods and tenses, must have a strong fascination. I walked on for many a mile while thus thinking, without the slightest sense of weariness, or any want of food. The morning glided over, and the hot noon was passed, and the day was sobering down into the more solemn tints of coming evening, and I still loitered, or lay in the tall grass, deep in my musings.

In taking my handkerchief from my pocket, I accidentally drew forth the priest's letter, and in a sort of half-indolent curiosity, proceeded to read it. The hand was cramped and rugged, the writing that of a man to whom the manual part of correspondence is a heavy burden, and who consequently incurs such labour as rarely as is possible. The composition had all the charm of ease, and was as unstudied as need be; the writer being evidently one who cared little for the graces of style, satisfied to discuss his subject in the familiar terms of his ordinary conversation.

Although I do not mean to impose more than an extract from it on my reader, I must reserve even that much for my next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER DYKE was one of those characters which Ireland alone produces — a sporting priest. In France, Spain, or Italy, the type is unknown. Time was, when the abbé, elegant, witty, and well-bred, was a great element of polished life; when his brilliant conversation and his insidious address threw all the charm of culture over a society which was only rescued from coarseness by the marvellous dexterity of such intellectual gladiators. They have passed away, like many other things brilliant and striking: the gilded coach, the red-heeled slipper, and the supper of the regency; the powdered marquise, for a smile of whose dimpled mouth the deadly rapier has flashed in the moonlight; the perfumed beauty, for one of whose glances a poet would have racked his brain to render worthily in verse; the gilded salon where, in a sort of incense, all the homage of genius was offered up before the altar of loveliness — gone are they all!

Au fond, the world is pretty much the same, although we drive to a club dinner in a one-horse brougham; and if we meet the curé of St. Roch, we find him to be rather a morose middle-aged man with a taste for truffles, and a talent for silence. It is not as the successor of the witty abbé, that I adduce the

sporting priest, but simply as a variety of the ecclesiastical character which, doubtless, a very few more years will have consigned to the realm of history. He, too, will be a bygone! Father Tom, as he was popularly called, never needing any more definite designation, was tam Marte quam Mercurio, as much poacher as priest, and made his sporting acquirements subservient to the demands of an admirable table. The thickest salmon, the curdiest trout, the fattest partridge, and the most tender woodcock, smoked on his board, and, rumour said, cooked with a delicacy that more pretentious houses could not rival. In the great world, nothing is more common than to see some favoured individual permitted to do things which, by common voice, are proclaimed impracticable or improper. With a sort of prescriptive right to outrage the ordinances of society, such people accept no law but their own inclination, and seem to declare that they are altogether exempt from the restraints that bind other men. In a small way and an humble sphere, Father Tom enjoyed this privilege, and there was not in his whole county to be found one man churlish or ungenerous enough to dispute it; and thus was he suffered to throw his line, snap his gun, or unleash his dog in precincts where many with higher claims had been refused permission.

It was not alone that he enjoyed the invigorating pleasure of field sports in practice, but he delighted in everything which bore any relationship to them. There was not a column of *Bell's Life* in which he had not

his sympathy — the pigeon match, the pedestrian, the Yankee trotter, the champion for the silver sculls at Chelsea, the dog "Billy," were all subjects of interest to him. Never did the most inveterate blue stocking more delight in the occasion of meeting a great celebrity of letters, than did he when chance threw him in the way of the jock who rode the winner at the Oaks, or the "Game Chicken" who punished the "Croydon Pet" in the prize ring. But now for the letter, which will as fully reveal the man as any mere description. It was a narrative of races he had attended, and rowing matches he had witnessed, with little episodes of hawking, badger drawing, and cock fighting intermixed:

"I came down here — Brighton — to swim for a wager of five-and-twenty sovereigns against a Major Blayse, of the Third Light Dragoon Guards; we made the match after mess at Aldershot, when neither of us was anything to speak of too sober; but as we were backed strongly — he rather the favourite — there was no way of drawing the bet. I beat him after a hard struggle; we were two hours and forty minutes in the water, and netted about sixty pounds besides. We dined with the depôt in the evening, and I won a ten-pound note on a question of whether there ought to be saffron in the American drink called 'greased lightning;' but this was not the only piece of luck that attended me, as you shall hear. As I was taking my morning canter on the Downs, I perceived that a stranger — a jockey-like fellow, not quite a gentleman,

but near it — seemed to keep me in view; now riding past, now behind me, and always bestowing his whole attention on my nag. Of course, I showed the beast off to the best, and handled him skilfully. I thought to myself, he likes the pony; he'll be for making me an offer for him. I was right. I had just seated myself at breakfast, when the stranger sent his card, with a request to speak to me. He was a foreigner, but spoke very correct English, and his object was to learn if I would sell my horse. It is needless to say that I refused at once. The animal suited me, and I was one of those people who find it excessively difficult to be mounted to their satisfaction. I needed temper, training, action, gentleness, beauty, high courage, and perfect steadiness, and a number of such-like seeming incongruities. He looked a little impatient at all this; he seemed to say, 'I know all this kind of nonsense; I have heard ship-loads of such gammon before. Be frank and say, what's the figure; how much do you want for him?' He looked this, I say; but he never uttered a word, and at last I asked him,

“‘Are you a dealer?’

“‘Well,’ said he, with an arch smile, ‘something in that line.’

“‘I thought so,’ said I. ‘The pony is a rare good one.’

He nodded assent.

“‘He can jump a bar of his own height?’

“Another nod.

“‘And he's as fresh on his legs —’

“‘As if he were not twenty-six years old,’ he broke in.

“‘Twenty-six fiddle-sticks! Look at his mouth; he has an eight-year old mouth.’

“‘I know it,’ said he, dryly; ‘and so he had fourteen years ago. Will you take fifty sovereigns for him?’ he added, drawing out a handful of gold from his pocket.

“‘No,’ said I, firmly; ‘nor sixty, nor seventy, nor eighty!’

“‘I am sorry to have intruded upon you,’ said he, rising, ‘and I beg you to excuse me. The simple fact is, that I am one who gains his living by horses, and it is only possible for me to exist by the generosity of those who deal with me.’

“‘This appeal was a home-thrust, and I said, ‘What can you afford to give?’

“‘All I have here,’ said he, producing a handful of gold, and spreading it on the table.

“‘We set to counting, and there were sixty-seven sovereigns in the mass. I swept off the money into the palm of my hand, and said, ‘The beast is yours.’

“‘He drew a long breath, as if to relieve his heart of a load of care, and said, ‘Men of *my* stamp, and who lead such lives as I do, are rarely superstitious.’

“‘Very true,’ said I, with a nod of encouragement for him to go on.

“‘Well,’ said he, resuming, ‘I never thought for a

moment that any possibility could have made me so. If ever there was a man that laughed at lucky and unlucky days, despised omens, sneered at warnings, and scorned at predictions, I was he; and yet I have lived to be the most credulous and the most superstitious of men. It is now fourteen years and twenty-seven days — I remember the time to an hour — since I sold that pony to the Prince Ernest von Saxenhausen, and since that day I never had luck. So long as I owned him all went well with me. I ought to tell you that I am the chief of a company of equestrians, and one corps, known as Klam's Kunst-Reiters, was the most celebrated on the Continent. In three years I made three hundred thousand guilders, and if the devil had not induced me to sell "Schatzchen" — that was his name — I should be this day as rich as Heman Rothschild! From the hour he walked out of the circus our calamities began. I lost my wife by fever at Wiesbaden, the most perfect high-school horsewoman in Europe; my son, of twenty years of age, fell and dislocated his neck; the year after, at Vienna, my daughter Gretchen was blinded riding through a fiery hoop at Homburg; and four years later, all the company died of yellow fever at the Havannah, leaving me utterly beggared and ruined. Now these, you would say, though great misfortunes, are all in the course of common events. But what will you say when, on the eve of each of them, "Schatzchen" appeared to me in a dream, performing some well-known feat or other, and bringing down, as he ever did,

thunders of applause; and never did he so appear without a disaster coming after. I struggled hard before I suffered this notion to influence me. It was years before I even mentioned it to any one; and I used for a while to make a jest of it in the circus, saying, "Take care of yourselves to-night, for I saw 'Schatzchen.'" Of course they were not the stuff to be deterred by such warnings, but they became so at last. That they did, and were so terrified, so thoroughly terrified, that the day after one of my visions not a single member of the troupe would venture on a hazardous feat of any kind; and if we performed at all, it was only some common-place exercises, with few risks, and no daring exploits whatever. Worn out with evil fortune, crushed and almost broken-hearted, I struggled on for years, secretly determining, if ever I should chance upon him, to buy back Schatzchen with my last penny in the world. Indeed, there were moments in which such was the intense excitement of my mind, I could have committed a dreadful crime to regain possession of him. We were on the eve of embarking for Ostend the other night, when I saw you riding on the Downs, and I came ashore at once to track you out, for I knew him, though fully half a mile away. None of my comrades could guess what detained me, nor understand why I asked each of them in turn to lend me whatever money he could spare. It was in this way I made up the little purse you see. It was thus provided that I dared to present myself to-day before you.'

"As he gave me this narrative his manner grew more eager and excited, and I could not help feeling that his mind, from the long-continued pressure of one thought, had received a serious shock. It was exactly one of those cases which physicians describe as leaving the intellect unimpaired, while some one faculty is under the thralldom of a dominant and all-pervading impression. I saw this more palpably, when, having declined to accept more than his original offer of fifty pounds, I replaced the remainder in his hand, he evinced scarcely any gratitude for my liberality, so totally was he engrossed by the idea that the horse was now his own, and that Fortune would no longer have any pretext for using him so severely as before.

"'I don't know — I cannot know,' said he, 'if fortune means to deal more kindly by me than heretofore, but I feel a sort of confidence in the future now; I have a kind of trustful courage as to what may come, that tells me no disaster will deter me, no mishap cast me down.'

"These were his words as he arose to take his leave. Of his meeting with the pony I am afraid to trust myself to speak. It was such an overflow of affection as one might witness from a long absent brother on being once again restored to his own. I cannot say that the beast knew him, nor would I go so far as to assert that he did not, for certainly some of his old instincts seemed gradually to revive within him on hearing certain words; and when ordered to take a respectful farewell of me, the pony planted a

foreleg on each of his master's shoulders, and, taking off his hat with his teeth, bowed twice or thrice in the most deferential fashion. I wished them both every success in life, and we parted. As I took my evening's stroll on the pier, I saw them embark for Ostend, the pony sheeted most carefully, and every imaginable precaution taken to ensure him against cold. The man himself was poorly clad and indifferently provided against the accidents of the voyage. He appeared to feel that the disparity required a word of apology, for he said, in a whisper: '*It'll soon furnish me with a warm cloak; it'll not leave me long in difficulties!*' I assure you, my dear Crofton, there was something contagious in the poor fellow's superstition, for, as he sailed away, the thought lay heavily on my heart, 'What if I, too, should have parted with my good luck in life? How if I have bartered my fortune for a few pieces of money?' The longer I dwelt on this theme, the more forcibly did it strike me. My original possession of the animal was accomplished in a way that aided the illusion. It was thus I won him on a hit of back-gammon!"

As I read thus far, the paper dropped from my hands, my head reeled, and in a faint dreamy state, as if drugged by some strong narcotic, I sank, I know not how long, unconscious. The first thing which met my eyes on awakening, was the line, "I won him on a hit of back-gammon!" The whole story was at once before me. It was of Blondel I was reading! Blondel was the beast whose influence had swayed one man's

destiny. So long as he owned him, the world went well and happily with him; all prospered and succeeded. It was a charm like the old lamp of Aladdin. And this was the treasure I had lost. So far from imputing an ignorant superstition to the German, I concurred in every speculation, every theory of his invention. The man had evidently discovered one of those curious problems in what we rashly call the doctrine of chances. It was not the animal himself that secured good fortune, it was that, in his "circumstances," what Strauff calls "*die umringenden Begebenheiten*" of his lot, this creature was sure to call forth efforts and develop resources in his possessor, of which, without his aid, he would have gone all through life unconscious.

The vulgar notion that our lives are the sport of accident — the minute too early or too late — the calm that detained us — the snow-storm that blocked the road — the chance meeting with this or that man, which we lay such stress on — what are they in reality but trivial incidents without force or effect, save that they impel to action? They call out certain qualities in our nature by which our whole characters become modified. Your horse balks at a fence and throws you over his head; the fall is not a very grave one, and you are scarcely hurt; you have fallen into a turnip-field, and the honest fellow who is hoeing away near comes kindly to your aid, and, in good Samaritan fashion, bathes your temples and restores you. When you leave him at last, you go forth with a kindlier notion of human nature; you recognise that tie "that

makes the whole world kin," and you seem to think that hard toil hardens not the heart, nor a life of labour shuts out generous sympathies — the lesson is a life one. But suppose that in your fall you alight on a bed of choice tulips, you descend in the midst of a rich parterre of starry anemonies, and that your first conscious struggles are met with words of anger and reproach; instead of sorrow for your suffering, you hear sarcasms on your horsemanship, and insults on your riding — no sympathy, no kindness, no generous anxiety for your safety, but all that irritate and offend — more thought, in fact, for the petals of a flower than for the ligaments of your knee, — then, too, is the lesson a life one, and its fruits will be bitter memories for many a year. The events of our existence are in reality nothing, save in our treatment of them. By Blondel, I recognised one of those suggestive influences which mould fate by moulding temperament. The deep-reflecting German saw this: it was clear *he* knew that in that animal was typified all that his life might become. Why should not I contest the prize with him? Blondel was charged with another destiny as well as his.

I turned once more to the letter, but I could not bear to read it; so many were the impertinent allusions to myself, my manner, my appearance, and my conversation. Still more insulting were the speculations as to what class or condition I belonged to. "He puzzled us completely," wrote the priest, "for while unmistakably vulgar in many things, there were cer-

tain indications of reading and education about him that refuted the notion of his being what Keldrum thought — an escaped counter-jumper! The Guardsman insisted he was a valet; my own impression was, the fellow had kept a small circulating library, and gone mad with the three-volume novels. At all events, I have given him a lesson which, whether profitable or not to *him*, has turned out tolerably well for *me*. If ever you chance to hear of him — his name was Podder or Pedder, I think — pray let me know, for my curiosity is still unslaked about him." He thence went off to a sort of descriptive catalogue of my signs and token, so positively insulting, that I cannot recal it; the whole winding up: "Add to all these, an immense pomposity of tone, with a lisp, and a Dublin accent, and you can scarcely mistake him." Need I say, benevolent reader, that fouler calumnies were never uttered, nor more unfounded slanders ever pronounced?

It is not in this age of photography that a man need defend his appearance. By the aid of sun and collodion, I may, perhaps, one day convince you that I am not so devoid of personal graces as this foul-mouthed priest would persuade you. I am, possibly, in this pledge, exceeding the exact limits which this publication may enable me to sustain. I may be contracting an engagement which cannot be, consistent with its principles, fulfilled. If so, I must be your artist; but I swear to you, that I shall not flatter.

Potts, painted by himself, shall be a true portrait. Meanwhile, I have time to look out for my canvas, and you will be patient enough to wait till it be filled.

Again to this confounded letter:

"There is another reason" (wrote Dyke) "why I should like to chance upon this fellow." ("This fellow" meant me.) "I used to fancy myself unequalled in the imaginative department of conversation, by the vulgar called lying. Here, I own, with some shame, he was my match. A more fearless, determined, go-ahead liar, I never met. Now, as one who deems himself no small proficient in the art, I would really like to meet him once more. We could approach each other like the augurs of old, and agree to be candid and free-spoken together, exchanging our ideas on this great topic, and frankly communicating any secret knowledge each might deem that he possessed. I'd go a hundred miles to pass an evening with him alone, to hear from his own lips the sort of early training and discipline his mind went through: who were his first instructors, what his original inducements. Of one thing I feel certain: a man thus constituted has only to put the curb upon his faculty to be most successful in life, his perils will all lie in the exuberance of his resources: let him simply bend himself to believe in some of the impositions he would force upon others. Let him give his delusions the force acquired

by convictions, and there is no limit to what he may become. Be on the look out, therefore, for him, as a great psychological phenomenon, the man who outlied

"Your sincerely attached friend,

"THOMAS DARCY DYKE.

"P. S. I have just remembered his name. It was Potts: the villain said from the Pozzo di Borgo family. I'm sure with this hint you can't fail to run him to earth; and I entreat of you spare no pains to do it."

There followed here some more impertinent personalities as clues to my discovery, which my indulgent reader will graciously excuse me if I do not stop to record; enough to say they were as unfounded as they were scurrilous.

Another and very different train of thought, however, soon banished these considerations. This letter had been given me by Crofton, who had already read it; he had perused all this insolent narrative about me before handing it to me, and, doubtless, in so doing, had no other intention than to convey, in the briefest and most emphatic way to me, that I was found out. It was simply saying, in the shortest possible space, "Thou art the man!" Oh, the ineffable shame and misery of that thought! Oh, the bitterness of feeling! How my character should now be viewed and my future discussed! "Only think, Mary," I fancied I heard him say — "only think who our friend should turn out to be — this same Potts: the fellow that vanquished Father Dyke in story-telling, and outlied

the priest! And here we have been lavishing kindness and attentions upon one who, after all, is little better than a swindler, sailing under false colours and fictitious credentials; for who can now credit one syllable about his having written those verses he read for us, or composed that tale of which he told us the opening? What a lesson in future about extending confidence to utter strangers! What caution and reserve should it not teach us! How guarded should we be not to suffer ourselves to be fascinated by the captivations of manner and the insinuating charms of address! If Potts had been less prepossessing in appearance, less gifted and agreeable — if, instead of being a consummate man of the world, with the breeding of a courtier and the knowledge of a scholar, he had been a pedantic puppy with a lisp and a Dublin accent ——” Oh, ignominy and disgrace! these were the very words of the priest in describing me, which came so aptly to my memory, and I grew actually sick with shame as I recalled them. I next became angry. Was this conduct of Crofton’s delicate or considerate? Was it becoming in one who had treated me as his friend thus abruptly to conclude our intimacy by an insult? Handing me such a letter was saying, “There’s a portrait, can you say any one it resembles?” How much more generous had he said, “Tell me all about this wager of yours with Father Dyke — I want to hear *your* account of it, for old Tom is not the most veracious of mortals, nor the most mealy-mouthed of commentators. Just give me *your*

version of the incident, Potts, and I am satisfied it will be the true one." That's what he might, that's what he ought to have said. I can swear it is what I, Potts, would have done by *him*, or by any other stranger whose graceful manners and pleasing qualities had won my esteem and conciliated my regard. I'd have said, "Potts, I have seen enough of life to know how unjust it is to measure men by one and the same standard. The ardent, impassioned nature cannot be ranked with the cold and calculating spirit. The imaginative man has the same necessity for the development of his creature faculty as the strongly muscular man of bodily exercise. He must blow off the steam of his invention, or the boiler will not contain it. You and Le Sage and Alexandre Dumas are a category. You are not the Clerks of a Census Commission, or Masters in Equity. You are the chartered libertines of fiction. Shake out your reefs, and go free — free as the winds that waft you!"

To all these reflections came the last one. "I must be up and doing, and that speedily! I will recover Blondel, if I devote my life to the task. I will regain him, let the cost be what it may. Mounted upon that creature, I will ride up to the Rosary; the time shall be evening; a sun just sunk behind the horizon shall have left in the upper atmosphere a golden and rosy light, which shall tip his name with a softened lustre, and shed over my own features a rich Titian-like tint. 'I come,' will I say, 'to vindicate the fair fame of one who once owned your affection. It is Potts, the

man of impulse, the child of enthusiasm, who now presents himself before you. Poor, if you like to call him so, in worldly craft or skill, poor in its possessions, but rich, boundlessly rich, in the stores of an ideal wealth. Blondel and I are the embodiment of this idea. These fancies you have stigmatised as lies are but the pilot balloons by which great minds calculate the currents in that upper air they are about to soar in."

And, last of all, there was a sophistry that possessed a great charm for my mind, in this wise: to enable a man, humble as myself, to reach that station in which a career of adventure should open before him, some ground must be won, some position gained. That I assume to be something that I am not, is simply to say that I trade upon credit. If my future transactions be all honourable and trustworthy — if by a fiction, only known to my own heart, I acquire that eminence from which I can distribute benefits to hundreds — who is to stigmatise me as a fraudulent trader?

Is it not a well-known fact, that many of those now acknowledged as the wealthiest of men, might, at some time or other of their lives, have been declared insolvent had the real state of their affairs been known? The world, however, had given them its confidence, and time did the rest. Let the same world be but as generous towards *me*! The day will come, I say it confidently and boldly, the day will come when I can "show my books," and "point to my balance-

sheet." When Archimedes asked for a base on which to rest his lever, he merely uttered the great truth, that some one fixed point is essential to the success of a motive power.

It is by our use or abuse of opportunity we are either good or bad men. The physician is not less conversant with noxious drugs than the poisoner; the difference lies in the fact that the one employs his skill to alleviate suffering, the other, to work out evil and destruction. If I, therefore, but make some feigned station in life the groundwork from which I can become the benefactor of my fellow-men, I shall be good and blameless. My heart tells me how well and how fairly I mean by the world: I would succour the weak, console the afflicted, and lift up the oppressed; and if to carry out grand and glorious conceptions of this kind all that be needed is a certain self-delusion which may extend its influence to others, "Go in," I say, "Potts; be all that your fancy suggests —

Dives, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum —

Be rich, honoured and fair, a prince or a begum —

but, above all, never distrust your destiny, or doubt your star."

CHAPTER VIII.

So absorbed was I in the reflections of which my last chapter is the record, that I utterly forgot how time was speeding, and perceived at last, to my great surprise, that I had strayed miles away from the Rosary, and that evening was already near. The spires and roofs of a town were distant about a mile at a bend of the river, and for this I now made, determined on no account to turn back, for how could I ever again face those who had read the terrible narrative of the priest's letter, and before whom I could only present myself as a cheat and impostor?

"No," thought I, "my destiny points onward — and to Blondel; nothing shall turn me from my path." Less than an hour's walking brought me to the town, of which I had but time to learn the name — New Ross. I left it in a small steamer for Waterford, a little vessel in correspondence with the mail packet for Milford, and which I learned would sail that evening at nine.

The same night saw me seated on the deck, bound for England. On the deck, I say, for I had need to husband my resources, and travel with every imaginable economy, not only because my resources were small in themselves, but that having left all that I

possessed of clothes and baggage at the Rosary, I should be obliged to acquire a complete outfit on reaching England.

It was a calm night, with a starry sky and a tranquil sea, and, when the cabin passengers had gone down to their berths, the captain did not oppose my stealing "aft" to the quarter-deck, where I could separate myself from the somewhat riotous company of the harvest labourers that thronged the forepart of the vessel. He saw, with that instinct a sailor is eminently gifted with, that I was not of that class by which I was surrounded, and with a ready courtesy he admitted me to the privilege of isolation.

"You are going to enlist, I'll be bound," said he, as he passed me in his short deck walk. "Ain't I right?"

"No," said I; "I'm going to seek my fortune."

"Seek your fortune!" he repeated, with a slighting sort of laugh. "One used to read about fellows doing that in story books when a child, but it's rather strange to hear of it now-a-days."

"And may I presume to ask why should it be more strange now than formerly? Is not the world pretty much what it used to be? Is not the drama of life the same stock piece our forefathers played ages ago? Are not the actors and the actresses made up of the precise materials their ancestors were? Can you tell me of a new sentiment, a new emotion, or even a new crime? Why, therefore, should there be a

seeming incongruity in reviving any feature of the past?"

"Just because it won't do, my good friend," said he, bluntly. "If the law catches a fellow lounging about the world in these times, it takes him up for a vagabond."

"And what can be finer, grander, or freer than a vagabond?" I cried, with enthusiasm. "Who, I would ask you, sees life with such philosophy? Who views the wiles, the snares, the petty conflicts of the world with such a reflective calm as his? Caring little for personal indulgence, not solicitous for self-gratification, he has both the spirit and the leisure for observation. Diogenes was the type of the vagabond, and see how successive ages have acknowledged his wisdom."

"If I had lived in *his* day, I'd have set him picking oakum for all that!" he replied.

"And probably, too, would have sent the 'blind old bard to the crank,'" said I.

"I'm not quite sure of whom you are talking," said he; "but if he was a good ballad-singer, I'd not be hard on him."

"O! Menin aeide Thea Peleiadeo Achilleos!" spouted I out, in rapture.

"That ain't high Dutch," asked he, "is it?"

"No," said I, proudly. "It is ancient Greek — the godlike tongue of an immortal race."

"Immortal rascals!" he broke in. "I was in the fruit trade up in the Levant there, and such scoundrels as these Greek fellows I never met in my life."

"By what and whom made so?" I exclaimed, eagerly. "Can you point to a people in the world who have so long resisted the barbarising influence of a base oppression? Was there ever a nation so imbued with high civilisation, as to be enabled for centuries of slavery to preserve the traditions of its greatness? Have we the record of any race but this, who could rise from the slough of degradation to the dignity of a people?"

"You've been a play-actor, I take it?" asked he, dryly.

"No, sir, never!" replied I, with some indignation.

"Well, then, in the Methody line? You've done a stroke of preaching, I'll be sworn."

"You would be perjured in that case, sir," I rejoined, as haughtily.

"At all events, an auctioneer," said he, fairly puzzled in his speculations.

"Equally mistaken there," said I, calmly; "bred in the midst of abundance, nurtured in affluence, and educated with all the solicitous care that a fond parent could bestow —"

"Gammon!" said he, bluntly. "You are one of the swell mob in distress!"

"Is this like distress?" said I, drawing forth my purse in which were seventy-five sovereigns, and handing it to him. "Count over that, and say how just and how generous are your suspicions."

He gravely took the purse from me, and, stooping

down to the binnacle light, counted over the money, scrutinising carefully the pieces as he went.

"And who is to say this isn't 'swag?'" said he, as he closed the purse.

"The easiest answer to that," said I, "is, would it be likely for a thief to show his booty, not merely to a stranger, but to a stranger who suspected him?"

"Well, that is something, I confess," said he, slowly.

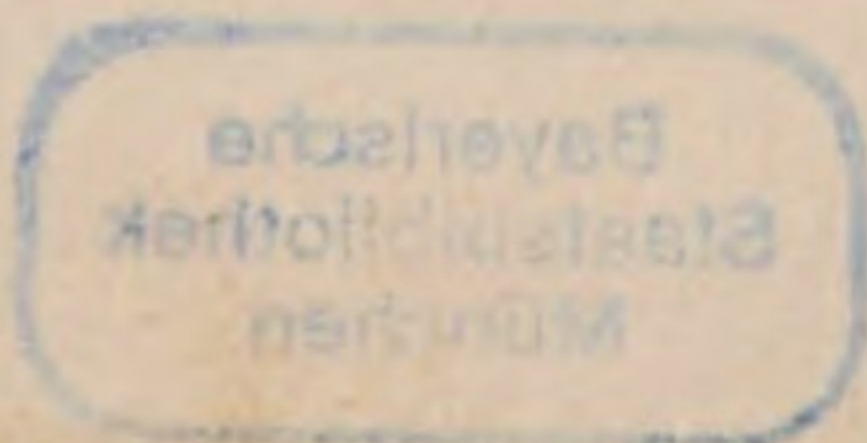
"It ought to be more — it ought to be everything. If distrust were not a debasing sentiment, obstructing the impulses of generosity and even invading the precincts of justice, you would see far more reason to confide in, than to disbelieve me."

"I've been done pretty often afore now," he muttered, half to himself.

"What a fallacy that is!" cried I, contemptuously. "Was not the pittance that some crafty impostor wrung from your compassion well repaid to you in the noble self-consciousness of your generosity? Did not your venison on that day taste better when you thought of his pork chop? Had not your Burgundy gained flavour by the memory of the glass of beer that was warming the half chilled heart in *his* breast? Oh, the narrow mockery of fancying that we are not better by being deceived!"

"How long is it since you had your head shaved?" he asked, dryly.

"I havest never been the inmate of an asylum for



lunatics," said I, divining and answering the impertinent insinuation.

"Well, I own you are a rum 'un," said he, half musingly.

"I accept even this humble tribute to my originality," said I, with a sort of proud defiance. "I am well aware how *he* must be regarded who dares to assert his own individuality."

"I'd be very curious to know," said he, after a pause of several minutes, "how a fellow of your stamp sets to work about gaining his livelihood? What's his first step? how does he go about it?"

I gave no other answer than a smile of scornful meaning.

"I meant nothing offensive," resumed he, "but I really have a strong desire to be enlightened on this point."

"You are doubtless impressed with the notion," said I boldly, "that men possessed of some distinct craft, or especial profession, are alone needed by the world of their fellows. That one must be doctor, or lawyer, or baker, or shoemaker, to gain his living, as if life had no other wants than to be clothed, and fed, and physicked, and litigated. As if humanity had not its thousand emotional moods, its wayward impulses, its trials and temptations, all of them more needing guidance, support, direction, and counsel, than the sickest patient needs a physician. It is on this world that I throw myself; I devote myself to guide infancy, to

console age, to succour the orphan, and support the widow — morally, I mean."

"I begin to suspect you are a most artful vagabond," said he, half angrily.

"I have long since reconciled myself to the thought of an unjust appreciation," said I. "It is the consolation dull men accept when confronted with those of original genius. You can't help confessing that all your distrust of me has grown out of the superiority of my powers, and the humble figure you have presented in comparison with me."

"Do you rank modesty amongst these same powers?" he asked, slyly.

"Modesty I reject," said I, "as being a conventional form of hypocrisy."

"Come down below," said he, "and take a glass of brandy-and-water. It's growing chilly here, and we shall be the better of something to cheer us."

Seated in his comfortable little cabin, and with a goodly array of liquors before me to choose from, I really felt a self-confidence in the fact that, if I were not something out of the common, I could not then be there. "There must be in my nature," thought I, "that element which begets success, or I could not always find myself in situations so palpably beyond the accidents of my condition."

My host was courtesy itself; no sooner was I his guest than he adopted towards me a manner of perfect politeness. No more allusions to my precarious mode of life, never once a reference to my adventurous future.

Indeed, with an almost artful exercise of good breeding, he turned the conversation towards himself, and gave me a sketch of his own life.

It was not in any respects a remarkable one; though it had its share of those mishaps and misfortunes which every sailor must have confronted. He was wrecked in the Pacific, and robbed in the Havannah; had his crew desert him at San Francisco, and was boarded by Riff pirates, and sold in Barbary just as every other blue jacket used to be, and I listened to the story, only marvelling what a dreary sameness pervades all these narratives. Why, for one trait of the truthful to prove his tale, I could have invented fifty. There were no little touches of sentiment or feeling; no relieving lights of human emotion in his story. I never felt, as I listened, any wish that he should be saved from shipwreck, baffle his persecutors, or escape his captors; and I thought to myself, "This fellow has certainly got no narrative gusto." Now for *my* turn: we had each of us partaken freely of the good liquor before us. The captain in his quality of talker, I, in my capacity of listener, had filled and refilled several times. There was not anything like inebriety, but there was that amount of exaltation, a stage higher than mere excitement, which prompts men, at least men of temperaments like mine, not to suffer themselves to occupy rear rank positions, but at any cost to become foreground and prominent figures.

"You have heard of the M'Gillicuddys, I sup-

pose?" asked I. He nodded, and I went on. "You see, then, at this moment before you the last of the race. I mean, of course, of the elder branch, for there are swarms of the others, well to do and prosperous also, and with fine estated properties. I'll not weary you with family history. I'll not refer to that remote time when my ancestors wore the crown, and ruled the fair kingdom of Kerry. In the Annals of the Four Masters, and also in the Chronicles of Thealbhogh O'Faudlemh, you'll find a detailed account of our house. I'll simply narrate for you the immediate incident which has made me what you see me — an outcast and a beggar:

"My father was the tried and trusted friend of that noble-hearted, but mistaken man, Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The famous attempt of the year 'eight was concerted between them, and all the causes of its failure, secret as they are and for ever must be, are known to him who now addresses you. I dare not trust myself to talk of these times or things, lest I should by accident let drop what might prove strictly confidential. I will but recount one incident, and that a personal one, of the period. On the night of Lord Edward's capture, my father, who had invited a friend — deep himself in the conspiracy — to dine with him, met his guest on the steps of his hall door. Mr. Hammond — this was his name — was pale and horror-struck, and could scarcely speak, as my father shook his hand. 'Do you know what has happened, Mac?' said he to my father. "Lord Edward is taken, Major

Sirr and his party have tracked him to his hiding-place; they have got hold of all our papers, and we are lost. By this time to-morrow every man of us will be within the walls of Newgate.'

"Don't look so gloomily, Tom,' said my father, 'Lord Edward will escape them yet; he's not a bird to be snared so easily; and after all we shall find means to slip our cables too. Come in, and enjoy your sir-loin and a good glass of port, and you'll view the world more pleasantly.' With a little encouragement of this sort he cheered him up, and the dinner passed off agreeably enough; but still my father could see that his friend was by no means at his ease, and at every time the door opened he would start with a degree of surprise that augured anxiety of some coming event. From these and other signs of uneasiness in his manner, my father drew his own conclusions, and with a quick intelligence of look communicated his suspicions to my mother, who was herself a keen and shrewd observer.

"Do you think, Matty,' said he, as they sat over their wine, 'that I could find a bottle of the old green seal if I was to look for it in the cellar? It has been upwards of forty years there, and I never touch it save on especial occasions; but an old friend like Hammond deserves such a treat.'

"My father fancied that Hammond grew paler as he thus alluded to their old friendship, and he gave my mother a rapid glance of his sharp eye, and, taking the cellar key, he left the room. Immediately

outside the door, he hastened to the stable, and saddled and bridled a horse, and slipping quietly out, he rode for the sea-coast, near the Skerries. It was sixteen miles from Dublin, but he did the distance within the hour. And well was it for him that he employed such speed! With a liberal offer of money, and the gold watch he wore, he secured a small fishing-smack to convey him over to France, for which he sailed immediately. I have said it was well that he employed such speed; for, after waiting with suppressed impatience for my father's return from the cellar, Hammond expressed to my mother his fears lest my father might have been taken ill. She tried to quiet his apprehensions, but the very calmness of her manner served only to increase them. 'I can bear this no longer,' cried he at last, rising in much excitement from his chair; 'I must see what has become of him!' At the same moment the door was suddenly flung open, and an officer of police in full uniform presented himself. 'He has got away, sir,' said he, addressing Hammond; 'the stable-door is open, and one of the horses missing.'

"My mother, from whom I heard the story, had only time to mutter a 'Thank God!' before she fainted. On recovering her senses, she found herself alone in the room. The traitor Hammond and the police had left her without even calling the servants to her aid."

"And your father — what became of him?" asked the skipper, eagerly.

“He arrived in Paris in sorry plight enough; but, fortunately, Clarke, whose influence with the Emperor was unbounded, was a distant connection of our family. By his intervention my father obtained an interview with his Majesty, who was greatly struck by the adventurous spirit and daring character of the man; not the less so because he had the courage to disabuse the Emperor of many notions and impressions he had conceived about the readiness of Ireland to accept French assistance.

“Though my father would much have preferred taking service in the army, the Emperor, who had strong prejudices against men becoming soldiers who had not served in every grade from the ranks upwards, opposed this intention, and employed him in a civil capacity. In fact, to his management were entrusted some of the most delicate and difficult secret negotiations; and he gained a high name for acuteness and honourable dealing. In recognition of his services, his name was inscribed in the Grand Livre for a considerable pension; but at the fall of the dynasty, this, with hundreds of others equally meritorious, was annulled; and my father, worn out with age and disappointment together, sank at last and died at Dinant, where my mother was buried but a few years previously. Meanwhile, he was tried and found guilty of high treason in Ireland, and all his lands and other property forfeited to the Crown. My present journey was simply a pilgrimage to see the old possessions that once belonged to our race. It was my father's

last wish that I should visit the ancient home of our family, and stand upon the hills that once acknowledged us as their ruler. He never desired that I should remain a French subject; a lingering love for his own country mingled in his heart with a certain resentment towards France, who had certainly treated him with ingratitude; and almost his last words to me were, 'Distrust the Gaul.' When I told you a while back that I was nurtured in affluence, it was so to all appearance; for my father had spent every shilling of his capital on my education, and I was under the firm conviction that I was born to a very great fortune. You may judge the terrible revulsion of my feelings when I learned that I had to face the world almost, if not actually, a beggar.

"I could easily have attached myself as a hanger-on of some of my well-to-do relations. Indeed, I will say for them, that they showed the kindest disposition to befriend me; but the position of a dependent would have destroyed every chance of happiness for me, and so I resolved that I would fearlessly throw myself upon the broad ocean of life, and trust that some sea current or favouring wind would bear me at last into a harbour of safety."

"What can you do?" asked the skipper, curtly.

"Everything, and nothing! I have, so to say, the 'sentiment' of all things in my heart, but am not capable of executing one of them. With the most correct ear, I know not a note of music; and though I

could not cook you a chop, I have^s the most excellent appreciation of a well-dressed dinner."

"Well," said he, laughing, "I must confess I don't suspect these to be exactly the sort of gifts to benefit your fellow-man."

"And yet," said I, "it is exactly to individuals of this stamp that the world accords its prizes. The impresario that provides the opera could not sing nor dance. The general who directs the campaign might be sorely puzzled how to clean his musket or pipeclay his belt. The great minister who imposes a tax might be totally unequal to the duty of applying its provisions. Ask him to gauge a hogshead of spirits, for instance. *My* position is like *theirs*. I tell you, once more, the world wants men of wide conceptions and far-ranging ideas — men who look to great results and grand combinations."

"But, to be practical, how do you mean to breakfast to-morrow morning?"

"At a moderate cost, but comfortably: tea, rolls, two eggs, and a rumpsteak with fried potatoes."

"What's your name?" said he, taking out his notebook. "I mustn't forget you when I hear of you next."

"For the present, I call myself Potts — Mr. Potts, if you please."

"Write it here yourself," said he, handing me the pencil. And I wrote in a bold, vigorous hand, 'Algernon Sydney Potts,' with the date.

"Preserve that autograph, captain," said I; "it is

in no spirit of vanity I say it, but the day will come you'll refuse a ten-pound note for it."

"Well, I'd take a trifle less just now," said he, smiling.

He sat for some time gravely contemplating the writing, and at length, in a sort of half soliloquy, said, "Bob would like him — he would suit Bob." Then, lifting his head, he addressed me: "I have a brother in command of one of the P. and O. steamers — just the fellow for *you*. He has got ideas pretty much like your own about success in life, and won't be persuaded that he isn't the first seaman in the English navy; or that he hasn't a plan to send Cherbourg and its break-water sky high, at twenty-four hours' warning."

"An enthusiast — a visionary, I have no doubt," said I, contemptuously.

"Well, I think you might be more merciful in your judgment of a man of your own stamp," retorted he, laughing. "At all events, it would be as good as a play to see you together. If you should chance to be at Malta, or Marseilles, when the *Clarence* touches there, just ask for Captain Rogers; tell him you know me, that will be enough."

"Why not give me a line of introduction to him?" said I, with an easy indifference. "These things serve to clear away the awkwardness of a self-presentation."

"I don't care if I do" said he, taking a sheet of paper, and beginning "Dear Bob," — after which he

paused and deliberated, muttering the words "Dear Bob" three or four times over below his breath.

"Dear Bob," said I, aloud, in the tone of one dictating to an amanuensis, — "This brief note will be handed to you by a very valued friend of mine, Algernon Sydney Potts, a man so completely after your own heart that I feel a downright satisfaction in bringing you together."

"Well, that ain't so bad," said he, as he uttered the last words which fell from his pen — "in bringing you together."

"Go on," said I, dictatorially, and continued: "'Thrown by a mere accident myself into his society, I was so struck by his attainments, the originality of his views, and the wide extent of his knowledge of life ——' Have you *that* down?"

"No," said he, in some confusion; "I am only at 'entertainments.'"

"I said '*at-tainments*,' sir," said I, rebukingly, and then repeating the passage word for word, till he had written it, — "that I conceived for him a regard and an esteem rarely accorded to others than our oldest friends.' One word more: 'Potts, from certain circumstances, which I cannot here enter upon, may appear to you in some temporary inconvenience' as regards money ——"

Here the captain stopped, and gave me a most significant look: it was at once an appreciation and an expression of drollery.

"Go on," said I, dryly. "If so," resumed I, "be

guardedly cautious neither to notice his embarrassment nor allude to it; above all, take especial care that you make no offer to remove the inconvenience, for he is one of those whose sensibilities are so fine, and whose sentiments so fastidious, that he could never recover, in his own esteem, the dignity compromised by such an incident."

"Very neatly turned," said he, as he re-read the passage. "I think that's quite enough."

"Ample. You have nothing more to do than sign your name to it."

He did this, with a verificatory flourish at foot, folded and sealed the letter, and handed it to me, saying,

"If it weren't for the handwriting Bob would never believe all that fine stuff came from *me*; but you'll tell him it was after three glasses of brandy-and-water that I dashed it off — that will explain everything."

I promised faithfully to make the required explanation, and then proceeded to make some inquiries about this brother Bob, whose nature was in such a close affinity with my own. I could learn, however, but little beyond the muttered acknowledgment that Bob was a "queer 'un," and that there was never his equal for "falling upon good luck, and spending it after," a description which, when applied to my own conscience, told an amount of truth that was actually painful.

"There's no saying," said I, as I pocketed the letter. "If this epistle should ever reach your brother's

hand, my course in life is too wayward and uncertain for me to say in what corner of the earth fate may find me; but if we *are* to meet, you shall hear of it. Rogers" — I said this in all the easy familiarity which brandy inspired — "I'll tell your brother of the warm and generous hospitality you extended to me, at a time that, to all seeming, I needed such attentions — at a time, I say, when none but myself could know how independently I stood as regarded means; and of one thing be assured, Rogers, he whose caprice it now is to call himself Potts, is your friend, your fast friend, for life."

He wrung my hand cordially — perhaps it was the easiest way for an honest sailor, as he was, to acknowledge the patronising tone of my speech — but I could plainly see that he was sorely puzzled by the situation, and possibly very well pleased that there was no third party to be a spectator of it.

"Throw yourself there on that sofa," said he, "and take a sleep." And with that piece of counsel he left me, and went up on deck.

CHAPTER IX.

NEXT mornings are terrible things, whether one awakes to the thought of some awful run of ill luck at play, or with the racking headache of new port, or a very "fruity" Burgundy. They are dreadful, too, when they bring memories — vague and indistinct, perhaps of some serious altercations, passionate words exchanged, and expressions of defiance reciprocated; but, as a measure of self-reproach and humiliation, I know not any distress can compare with the sensation of awaking to the consciousness that our cups have so ministered to imagination, that we have given a mythical narrative of ourself and our belongings, and have built up a card edifice of greatness that must tumble with the first touch of truth.

It was a sincere satisfaction to me that I saw nothing of the skipper on that "next morning." He was so occupied with all the details of getting into port, that I escaped his notice, and contrived to land unremarked. Little scraps of my last night's biography would obtrude themselves upon me, mixed up strangely with incidents of that same skipper's life, so that I was actually puzzled at moments to remember whether *he* was not the descendant of the famous rebel friend of Lord Edward Fitz-

gerald and *I* it was who was sold in the public square at Tunis.'

These dissolving views of an evening before are very difficult problems — not to *you*, most valued reader, whose conscience is not burglariously assaulted by a riotous imagination, but to the poor weak Potts-like organisations, the men who never enjoy a real sensation, or taste a real pleasure, save on the hypothesis of a mock situation.

I sat at my breakfast in the "Goat" meditating these things. The grand problem to resolve was this: Is it better to live a life of dull incidents and common-place events in one's own actual sphere, or, creating, by force of imagination, an ideal status, to soar into a region of higher conceptions, and more pictorial situations? What could existence in the first case offer me? A wearisome beaten path, with nothing to interest, nothing to stimulate me. On the other side, lay glorious regions of lovely scenery, peopled with figures the most graceful and attractive. I was at once the associate of the wise, the witty, and the agreeable, with wealth at my command, and great prizes within my reach. Illusions all! to be sure; but what are not illusions — if by that word you take mere account of permanence? What is it in this world that we love to believe real is not illusionary — the question of duration being the only difference? Is not beauty perishable? Is not wit soon exhausted? What becomes of the proudest physical strength after middle life is reached? What of eloquence when the voice fails or loses its facility of inflexion?

All these considerations, however convincing to myself, were not equally satisfactory as regarded others, and so I sat down to write a letter to Crofton, explaining the reasons of my sudden departure, and enclosing him Father Dyke's epistle, which I had carried away with me. I began this letter with the most firm resolve to be truthful and accurate. I wrote down not only the date but the day, "'Goat,' Milford," followed, and then, "My dear Crofton, — It would ill become one who has partaken of your generous hospitality, and who, from an unknown stranger, was admitted to the privilege of your intimacy, to quit the roof beneath which the happiest hours of his life were passed without expressing the deep shame and sorrow such a step has cost him, while he bespeaks your indulgence to hear the reason." This was my first sentence, and it gave me uncommon trouble. I desired to be dignified, yet grateful, proud in my humility, grieved over an abrupt departure, but sustained by a manly confidence in the strength of my own motives. If I read it over once, I read it twenty times; now deeming it too diffuse, now fearing lest I had compressed my meaning too narrowly. Might it not be better to open thus: "Strike, but hear me, dear Crofton, or before condemning the unhappy creature whose abject cry for mercy may seem but to increase the presumption of his guilt, and in whose faltering accents may appear the signs of a stricken conscience, read over, dear friend, the entire of this letter, weigh well the difficulties and dangers of him who wrote it, and say, is he not rather a

subject for pity than rebuke? Is not this more a case for a tearful forgiveness than for chastisement and reproach?"

Like most men who have little habit of composition, my difficulties increased with every new attempt, and I became bewildered and puzzled what to choose. It was vitally important that the first lines of my letter should secure the favourable opinion of the reader; by one unhappy word, one ill-selected expression, a whole case might be prejudiced. I imagined Crofton angrily throwing the epistle from him with an impatient "Stuff and nonsense! a practised humbugger!" or, worse, again, calling out, "Listen to this, Mary. Is not Master Potts a cool hand? Is not this brazening it out with a vengeance?" Such a thought was agony to me; the very essence of my theory about life was to secure the esteem and regard of others. I yearned after the good opinion of my fellowmen, and there was no amount of falsehood I would not incur to obtain it. No, come what would of it, the Croftons must not think ill of me. They must not only believe me guiltless of ingratitude, but some one whose gratitude was worth having. It will elevate them in their own esteem if they suppose that the pebble they picked up in the highway turned out to be a ruby. It will open their hearts to fresh impulses of generosity; they will not say to each other, "Let us be more careful another time; let us be guarded against showing attention to mere strangers; remember how we were taken in by that fellow Potts; what a specious rascal he was —

how plausible, how insinuating!" but rather, "We can afford to be confiding, our experiences have taught us trustfulness. Poor Potts is a lesson that may inspire a hopeful belief in others." How little benefit can any one in his own individual capacity confer upon the world, but what a large measure of good may be distributed by the way he influences others. Thus, for instance, by one well sustained delusion of mine, I inspire a fund of virtues which, in my merely truthful character, I could never pretend to originate. "Yes," thought I, "the Croftons shall continue to esteem me; Potts shall be a beacon to guide, not a sunken rock to wreck them."

Thus resolving, I sat down to inform them that on my return from a stroll, I was met by a man bearing a telegram, informing me of the dying condition of my father's only brother, my sole relative on earth; that, yielding only to the impulse of my affection, and not thinking of preparation, I started on board of a steamer for Waterford, and thence for Milford on my way to Brighton. I vaguely hinted at great expectations and so on, and then approaching the difficult problem of Father Dyke's letter, I said, "I enclose you the priest's letter, which amused me much. With all his shrewdness, the worthy churchman never suspected how completely my friend Keldrum and myself had humbugged him, nor did he discover that our little dinner and the episode that followed it were the subjects of a wager between ourselves. His marvellous cunning was thus for once at fault, as I shall explain to you more fully

when we meet, and prove to you that, upon this occasion at least, he was not deceiver but dupe!" I begged to have a line from him to the "Crown Hotel, Brighton," and concluded.

With this act, I felt I had done with the past, and now addressed myself to the future. I purchased a few cheap necessities for the road, as few and as cheap as was well possible; I said to myself, fortune shall lift you from the very dust of the high road, Potts, not one advantageous adjunct shall aid your elevation!

The train by which I was to leave, did not start till noon, and to wile away time I took up a number of the *Times*, which the "Goat" appeared to receive at third or fourth hand. My eye fell upon the memorable second column, in which I read the following:

"Left his home in Dublin on the 8th ult., and not since been heard of, a young gentleman, aged about twenty-two years, five feet nine and a quarter in height, slightly formed, and rather stooped in the shoulders, features pale and melancholy, eyes greyish, inclining to hazel, hair light brown, and worn long behind. He had on at his departure ——"

I turned impatiently to the foot of the advertisement, and found that to any one giving such information as might lead to his discovery, was promised a liberal reward, on application to Messrs. Potts and Co., Compounding Chemists and Apothecaries, Mary's Abbey. I actually grew sick with anger as I read this. To what end was it that I built up a glorious edifice

of imaginative architecture, if by one miserable touch of coarse fact it could crumble into clay? To what purpose did I intrigue with Fortune to grant me a special destiny, if I were thus to be classed with runaway traders or strayed terriers? I believe in my heart I could better have borne all the terrors of a charge of felony, than the lowering, debasing, humiliating condition, of being advertised for on a reward.

I had long since determined to be free as regarded the ties of country. I now resolved to be equally so with respect to those of family. I will be Potts no longer. I will call myself for the future — let me see — what shall it be that will not involve a continued exercise of memory, and the troublesome task of unmarking my linen? I was forgetting in this that I had none, all my wearables being left behind at the Rosary. Something with an initial P was requisite, and after much canvassing, I fixed on Pottinger. If by an unhappy chance I should meet one who remembered me as Potts, I reserved the right of mildly correcting him by saying, "Pottinger, Pottinger! the name Potts was given me when at Eton for shortness." They tell us that amongst the days of our exultation in life, few can compare with that in which we exchange a jacket for a tailed coat: the spring from the tadpole to the full-grown frog: the emancipation from boyhood into adolescence is certainly very fascinating. Let me assure my reader that the bound from a monosyllabic name to a high-sounding epithet of three syllables, is almost as enchanting as this assumption of

the *toga virilis*. I had often felt the terrible brevity of Potts; I had shrunk from answering the question "What name, sir?" from the indescribable shame of saying, Potts; but Pottinger could be uttered slowly and with dignity. One could repose on the initial syllable, as if to say, "Mark well what I am saying; this is a name to be remembered." With that, there must have been great and distinguished Pottingers, rich men, men of influence and acres; from these I could at leisure select a parentage.

"Do you go by the twelve-fifteen train, sir?" asked the waiter, breaking in upon these meditations. "You have no time to lose, Sir."

With a start, I saw it was already past twelve, so I paid my bill with all speed, and taking my knapsack in my hand, hurried away to the train. There was considerable confusion as I arrived, a crush of cabs, watermen, and porters, blocked the way, and the two currents of an arriving and departing train struggled against and confronted each other. Amongst those, who like myself were bent on entering the station-house, was a young lady in deep mourning, whose frail proportions and delicate figure gave no prospect of resisting the shock and conflict before her. Seeing her so destitute of all protection, I espoused her cause, and after a valorous effort and much buffeting, I fought her way for her to the ticket-window, but only in time to hear the odious crash of a great bell, the bang of a glass door, and the cry of a policeman on duty, "No more tickets, gentlemen! the train is starting!"

"Oh, what shall I do!" cried she, in an accent of intense agony, inadvertently addressing the words to myself. "What shall I do!"

"There's another train to start at three-forty," said I, consolingly. "I hope that waiting will be no inconvenience to you. It is a slow one, to be sure, stops everywhere, and only arrives in town at two o'clock in the morning."

I heard her sob; I distinctly heard her sob behind her thick black veil, as I said this; and to offer what amount of comfort I could, I added, "I, too, am disappointed, and obliged to await the next departure, and if I can be of the least service in any way —"

"Oh, no, sir! I am very grateful to you, but there is nothing — I mean — there is no help for it!" And here her voice dropped to a mere whisper.

"I sincerely trust," said I, in an accent of great deference and sympathy, "that the delay may not be the cause of grave inconvenience to you; and although a perfect stranger, if any assistance I can offer —"

"No, sir; there is really nothing I could ask from your kindness. It was in turning back to bid good-bye a second time to my mother —" Here her agitation seemed to choke her, for she turned away, and said no more.

"Shall I fetch a cab for you?" I asked. "Would you like to go back till the next train starts?"

"Oh, by no means, sir! We live three miles from Milford; and besides, I could not bear —" Here again

she broke down, but added after a pause, "It is the first time I have been away from home!"

With a little gentle force, I succeeded in inducing her to enter the refreshment-room of the station, but she would take nothing; and after some attempts to engage her in conversation to while away the dreary time, I perceived that it would be a more true politeness not to obtrude upon her sorrow; and so I lighted my cigar, and proceeded to walk up and down the long terrace of the station. Three trunks, or rather two and a hat-box, kept my knapsack company on the side of the tramway, and on these I read, inscribed in a large hand, "Miss K. Herbert, per steamer *Ardent*, Ostend." I started. Was it not in that direction my own steps were turned? Was not Blondel in Belgium, and was it not in search of him that I was bent? "Oh, Fate!" I cried; "what subtle device of thine is this? What wily artifice art thou now engaged in? Is this a snare, or is it an aid? Hast thou any secret purpose in this rencontre, for with thee, there are no chances, no accidents in thy vicissitudes, all is prepared and fitted, like a piece of door carpentry?" and then I fell into weaving a story for the young lady: She was an orphan. Her father, the curate of the little parish she lived in, had just died, leaving herself and her mother in direst distress. She was leaving home — the happy home of her childhood (I saw it all before me — cottage, and garden, and little lawn, with its one cow and two sheep, and the small green wicket beside the road), and she was leaving all these to become a governess

to an upstart, mill-owning, vulgar family at Brussels. Poor thing, how my heart bled for her! What a life of misery lay before her! What trials of temper and of pride! The odious children — I know they are odious — will torture her to the quick; and Mrs. Treddles, or whatever her detestable name is, will lead her a terrible life from jealousy, and she'll have to bear everything, and cry over it in secret, remembering the once happy time in that honeysuckled porch, where poor papa used to read Wordsworth for them.

What a world of sorrow on every side! and how easily might it be made otherwise. What gigantic efforts are we for ever making for something which we never live to enjoy. Striving to be freer, greater, better governed, and more lightly taxed, and all the while forgetting that the real secret is to be on better terms with each other; more generous, more forgiving, less apt to take offence, or bear malice. Of mere material goods, there is far more than we need. The table would accommodate more than double the guests, could we only agree to sit down in orderly fashion; but here we have one occupying three chairs, while another crouches on the floor, and some even prefer smashing the furniture to letting some more humbly born take a place near them. I wish they would listen to me on this theme. I wish, instead of all this social science humbug and art-union balderdash, they would hearken to the voice of a plain man, saying, Are you not members of one family — the individuals of one household? Is it not clear to you, if you extend the

kindly affections you now reserve for the narrow circle wherein you live to the wider area of mankind, that, while diffusing countless blessings to others, you will yourself become better, more charitable, more kind-hearted, wider in reach of thought, more catholic in philanthropy? I can imagine such a world, and feel it to be a Paradise — a world with no social distinctions, no inequalities of condition, and, consequently, no insolent pride of station, nor any degrading subserviency of demeanour, no rivalries, no jealousies — love and benevolence everywhere. In such a sphere, the calm equanimity of mind by which great things are accomplished, would in itself constitute a perfect heaven. No impatience of temper, no passing irritation —

“Where the — are you driving to, sir?” cried I, as a fellow with a brass-bound trunk in a hand-barrow came smash against my shin.

“Don’t you see, sir, the train is just starting?” said he, hastening on; and I now perceived that such was the case, and that I had barely time to rush down to the pay-office and secure my ticket.

“What class, sir?” cried the clerk.

“Which has she taken?” said I, forgetting all save the current of my own thoughts.

“First or second, sir?” repeated he, impatiently.

“Either, or both,” replied I, in confusion; and he flung me back some change and a blue card, closing the little shutter with a bang that announced the end of all colloquy.

“Get in, sir!”

"Which carriage?"

"Get in, sir!"

"Second-class? Here you are!" called out an official, as he thrust me almost rudely into a vile mob of travellers.

The bell rang out, and two snorts and a scream followed, then a heave and a jerk, and away we went. As soon as I had time to look around me, I saw that my companions were all persons of an humble order of the middle class — the small shopkeepers and traders probably of the locality we were leaving. Their easy recognition of each other, and the natural way their conversation took up local matters, soon satisfied me of this fact, and reconciled me to fall back upon my own thoughts for occupation and amusement. This was with me the usual prelude to a sleep, to which I was quietly composing myself soon after. The drop-pings of the conversation around me, however, prevented this; for the talk had taken a discussional tone, and the differences of opinion were numerous. The question debated was, whether a certain Sir Samuel Somebody was a great rogue or only unfortunate. The reasons for either opinion were well put and defended, showing that the company, like most others of that class in life in England, had cultivated their faculties of judgment and investigation by the habit of attending trials or reading reports of them in newspapers.

After the discussion on his morality, came the question, Was he alive or dead?

"Sir Samuel never shot himself, sir," said a short

pluffy man with an asthma. "I've known him for years, and I can say he was not a man to do such an act."

"Well, sir, the Ostrich and the United Brethren offices are both of your opinion," said another; "they'll not pay the policy on his life."

"The law only recognises death on production of the body," sagely observed a man in shabby black, with a satin neckcloth, and whom I afterwards perceived was regarded as a legal authority.

"What's to be done, then, if a man be drowned at sea, or burned to a cinder in a lime-kiln?"

"Ay, or by what they call spontaneous combustion, that doesn't leave a shred of you?" cried three objectors in turn.

"The law provides for these emergencies with its usual wisdom, gentlemen. Where death may not be actually proven it can be often inferred."

"But who says that Sir Samuel is dead?" broke in the asthmatic man, evidently impatient at the didactic tone of the attorney. "All we know of the matter is a letter of his own signing, that when these lines are read I shall be no more. Now, is that sufficient evidence of death to induce an insurance company to hand over some eight or ten thousand pounds to his family?"

"I believe you might say thirty thousand, sir," suggested a mild voice from the corner.

"Nothing of the kind," interposed another; "the really heavy policies on his life were held by an old

Cumberland baronet, Sir Elkanah Crofton, who first established Whalley in the iron trade. I've heard it from my father fifty times, when a child, that Sam Whalley entered Milford in a fustian jacket, with all his traps in a handkerchief."

At the mention of Sir Elkanah Crofton, my attention was quickly excited; this was the uncle of my friends at the Rosary, and I was at once curious to hear more of him.

"Fustian jacket or not, he had a good head on his shoulders," remarked one.

"And luck, sir! luck, which is better than any head," sighed the meek man, sorrowfully.

"I deny that, deny it totally," broke in he of the asthma. "If Sam Whalley hadn't been a man of first-rate order, he never could have made that concern what it was — the first foundry in Wales."

"And what is it now, and where is he?" asked the attorney, triumphantly.

"At rest, I hope?" murmured the sad man.

"Not a bit of it, sir," said the wheezing voice, in a tone of confidence; "take *my* word for it, he's alive and hearty, somewhere or other, ay, and we'll hear of him one of these days: he'll be smelting metals in Africa, or cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Heaven knows what, or prime minister of one of those rajahs in India. He's a clever dog, and he knows it too. I saw what he thought of himself the day old Sir Elkanah came down to Fairbridge."

"To be sure, you were there that morning," said the attorney; "tell us about that meeting."

"It's soon told," resumed the other. "When Sir Elkanah Crofton arrived at the house, we were all in the garden. Sir Samuel had taken me there to see some tulips, which he said were the finest in Europe, except some at the Hague. Maybe it was that the old baronet was vexed at seeing nobody come to meet him, or that something else had crossed him, but as he entered the garden I saw he was sorely out of temper.

"How d'ye do, Sir Elkanah?" said Whalley to him, coming up pleasantly. "We scarcely expected you before dinner-time. My wife and my daughters," said he, introducing them; but the other only removed his hat ceremoniously, without ever noticing them in the least.

"I hope you had a pleasant journey, Sir Elkanah?" said Whalley, after a pause, while, with a short jerk of his head, he made signs to the ladies to leave them.

"I trust I am not the means of breaking up a family party?" said the other, half sarcastically. "Is Mrs. Whalley —"

"Lady Whalley, with your good permission, sir," said Samuel, stiffly.

"Of course — how stupid of me! I should remember you had been knighted. And, indeed, the thought was full upon me as I came along, for I scarcely suppose that if higher ambitions had not pos-

sessed you, I should find the farm buildings and the outhouse in the state of ruin I see them.'

" 'They are better by ten thousand pounds than the day on which I first saw them; and I say it in the presence of this honest townsman here, my neighbour' — meaning *me* — 'that both *you* and they were very creaky concerns when I took you in hand.'

"I thought the old baronet was going to have a fit at these words, and he caught hold of my arm and swayed backwards and forwards all the time, his face purple with passion.

" 'Who made you, sir? who made you?' cried he at last, with a voice trembling with rage.

" 'The same hand that made us all,' said the other, calmly. 'The same wise Providence that, for his own ends, creates drones as well as bees, and makes rickety old baronets as well as men of brains and industry.'

" 'You shall rue this insolence — it shall cost you dearly, by Heaven!' cried out the old man, as he gripped me tighter. 'You are a witness, sir, to the way I have been insulted. I'll foreclose your mortgage — I'll call in every shilling I have advanced — I'll sell the house over your head —'

" 'Ay! but the head without a roof over it will hold itself higher than your own, old man. The good faculties and good health God has given me are worth all your title-deeds twice told. If I walk out of this town as poor as the day I came into it, I'll go with the calm certainty that I can earn my bread — a pro-

cess that would be very difficult for *you* when you could not lend out money on interest.'

"'Give me your arm, sir, back to the town,' said the old baronet to me; 'I feel myself too ill to go all alone.'

"'Get him to step into the house and take something,' whispered Whalley in my ear, as he turned away and left us. But I was afraid to propose it, indeed, if I had, I believe the old man would have had a fit on the spot, for he trembled from head to foot, and drew long sighs, as if recovering out of a faint.

"'Is there an inn near this,' asked he, 'where I can stop? and have you a doctor here?'

"'You can have both, Sir Elkanah,' said I.

"'You know me, then? — you know who I am?' said he, hastily, as I called him by his name.

"'That I do, sir, and I hold my place under you; my name is Shore.'

"'Yes, I remember,' said he, vaguely, as he moved away. When we came to the gate on the road he turned around full and looked at the house, overgrown with that rich red creeper that was so much admired. 'Mark my words, my good man,' said he — 'mark them well, and as sure as I live, I'll not leave one stone on another of that dwelling there.'"

"He was promising more than he could perform," said the attorney.

"I don't know that," sighed the meek man; "there's very little that money can't do in this life."

"And what has become of Whalley's widow — if she be a widow?" asked one.

"She's in a poor way. She's up at the village yonder, and, with the help of one of her girls, she's trying to keep a children's school."

"Lady Whalley's school?" exclaimed one, in half sarcasm.

"Yes; but she has taken her maiden name again since this disaster, and calls herself Mrs. Herbert."

"Has she more than one daughter, sir?" I asked of the last speaker.

"Yes, there are two girls; the younger one, they tell me, is going, or gone, abroad, to take some situation or other — a teacher, or a governess."

"No, sir," said the pluffy man, "Miss Kate has gone as companion to an old widow lady at Brussels — Mrs. Keats. I saw the letter that arranged the terms — a trifle less per annum than her mother gave to her maid."

"Poor girl!" sighed the sad man. "It's a dreary way to begin life!"

I nodded assentingly to him, and with a smile of gratitude for his sympathy. Indeed, the sentiment had linked me to him, and made me wish to be beside him. The conversation now grew discursive, on the score of all the difficulties that beset women when reduced to make efforts for their own support; and though the speakers were men well able to understand and pronounce upon the knotty problem, the subject did not possess interest enough to turn my mind from

the details I had just been hearing. The name of Miss Herbert on the trunks showed me now who was the young lady I had met, and I reproached myself bitterly with having separated from her, and thus forfeited the occasion of befriending her on her journey. We were to sup somewhere about eleven, and I resolved that I would do my utmost to discover her, if in the train; and I occupied myself now with imagining numerous pretexts for presuming to offer my services on her behalf. She will readily comprehend the disinterested character of my attentions. She will see that I come in no spirit of levity, but moved by a true sympathy and the respectful sentiment of one touched by her sorrows. I can fancy her coy diffidence giving way before the deferential homage of my manner; and in this I really believe I have some tact. I was not sorry to pursue this theme undisturbed by the presence of my fellow-travellers, who had now got out at a station, leaving me all alone to meditate and devise imaginary conversations with Miss Herbert. I rehearsed to myself the words by which to address her, my bow, my gesture, my faint smile, a blending of melancholy with kindness, my whole air a union of the deference of the stranger with something almost fraternal. These pleasant musings were now rudely routed by the return of my fellow-travellers, who came hurrying back to their places at the banging summons of a great bell.

"Everything cold, as usual. It is a perfect disgrace how the public are treated on this line!" cried one.

"I never think of anything but a biscuit and a glass of ale, and they charged me elevenpence halfpenny for that."

"The directors ought to look to this. I saw those ham sandwiches when I came down here last Tuesday week."

"And though the time-table gives us fifteen minutes, I can swear, for I laid my watch on the table, that we only got nine and a half."

"Well, I supped heartily off that spiced round."

"Supped, supped! Did you say you had supped here, sir?" asked I, in anxiety.

"Yes, sir; that last station was Trentham. They give us nothing more now till we reach town."

I lay back with a faint sigh, and, from that moment, took no note of time till the guard cried "London!"

CHAPTER X.

"Young lady in deep mourning, sir — crape shawl and bonnet, sir," said the official, in answer to my question, aided by a shilling fee; "the same as asked where was the station for the Dover line."

"Yes, yes; that must be she."

"Got into a cab, sir, and drove off straight for the Sou'-Eastern."

"She was quite alone?"

"Quite, sir; but she seems used to travelling — got her traps together in no time, and was off in a jiffy."

"Stupid dog!" thought I; "with every advantage position and accident can confer, how little this fellow reads of character. In this poor forlorn, heart-weary orphan, he only sees something like a commercial traveller!"

"Any luggage, sir? Is this yours?" said he, pointing to a woolsack.

"No," said I, haughtily; "my servants have gone forward with my luggage. I have nothing but a knapsack." And with an air of dignity I flung it into a Hansom, and ordered the driver to set me down at the South-Eastern. Although using every exertion, the train had just started when I arrived, and a second time was I obliged to wait some hours at a station.

Resolving to free myself from all the captivations of that tendency to day-dreaming — that fatal habit of suffering my fancy to direct my steps, as though in pursuit of some settled purpose — I calmly asked myself whither I was going — and for what? Before I had begun the examination, I deemed myself a most candid, truth-observing, frank witness, and now I discovered that I was casuistical and “dodgy” as an Old Bailey lawyer. I was haughty and indignant at being so catechised. My conscience, on the shallow pretext of being greatly interested about me, was simply prying and inquisitive. Conscience is all very well when one desires to appeal to it, and refer some distinct motive or action to its appreciation; but it is scarcely fair, and certainly not dignified, for conscience to go about seeking for little accusations of this kind or that. What liberty of action is there, besides, to a man who carries a “detective” with him wherever he goes? And lastly, conscience has the intolerable habit of obtruding its opinion upon details, and will not wait to judge by results. Now, when I have won the race, come in first, amid the enthusiastic cheers of thousands, I don’t care to be asked, however privately, whether I did not practise some little bit of rather unfair jockeyship. I never could rightly get over my dislike to the friend who would take this liberty with me; and this is exactly the part conscience plays, and with an insufferable air of superiority too, as though to say, “None of your shuffling with *me*, Potts! That will do all mighty well with the outer world, but *I* am not to be hum-

bugged. You never devised a scheme in your life that I was not by at the cookery, and saw how you mixed the ingredients and stirred the pot! No, no, old fellow, all your little secret rogueries will avail you nothing here!"

Had these words been actually addressed to me by a living individual, I could not have heard them more plainly than now they fell upon my ear, uttered, besides, in a tone of cutting, sarcastic derision. "I will stand this no longer!" cried I, springing up from my seat and flinging my cigar angrily away. "I'm certain no man ever accomplished any high and great destiny in life who suffered himself to be bullied in this wise; such irritating, pestering impertinence would destroy the temper of a saint, and break down the courage and damp the ardour of the boldest. Could great measures of statecraft be carried out — could battles be won — could new continents be discovered, if at every strait and every emergency, one was to be interrupted by a low voice, whispering, 'Is this *all* right? Are there no flaws here? You live in a world of frailties, Potts. You are playing at a round game, where every one cheats a little, and where the rogueries are never remembered against him who wins. Bear that in your mind, and keep your cards "up."'"

When I was about to take my ticket, a dictum of the great moralist struck my mind: "Desultory reading has slain its thousands and tens of thousands;" and if desultory reading, why not infinitely more so desultory acquaintance. Surely, our readings do not impress us

as powerfully as the actual intercourse of life. It must be so. It is in this daily conflict with our fellow-men that we are moulded and fashioned, and the danger is, to commingle and confuse the impressions made upon our hearts — to cross the writing on our natures so often that nothing remains legible! “I will guard against this peril,” thought I. “I will concentrate my intentions and travel alone.” I slipped a crown into a guard’s hand and whispered, “Put no one in here if you can help it.”

As I jogged along, all by myself, I could not help feeling that one of the highest privileges of wealth must be, to be able always to buy solitude — to be in a position to say, “None shall invade me. The world must contrive to go round without a kick from *me*. I am a self-contained and self-suffering creature.” If I were Rothschild I’d revel in this sentiment; it places one so immeasurably above that busy ant-hill where one sees the creatures hurrying, hastening, and fagging “till their hearts are broken.” One feels himself a superior intelligence — a being above the wants and cares of the work-a-day world around him.

“Any room here?” cried a merry voice, breaking in upon my musings, and at the same instant a young fellow, in a grey travelling suit and a wideawake, flung a dressing-bag and a wrapper carelessly into the carriage, and so recklessly as to come tumbling over me. He never thought of apology, however, but continued his remarks to the guard, who was evidently endeavouring to induce him to take a place elsewhere. “No,

no!" cried the young man; "I'm all right here, and the cove with the yellow hair won't object to my smoking."

I heard these words as I sat in the corner, and I need scarcely say how grossly the impertinence offended me. That the privacy I had paid for should be invaded was bad enough, but that my companion should begin acquaintance with an insult was worse again, and so I determined on no account, nor upon any pretext, would I hold intercourse with him, but maintain a perfect silence and reserve so long as our journey lasted.

There was an insufferable jauntiness and self-satisfaction in every movement of the new arrival, even to the reckless way he pitched into the carriage three small white canvas bags, carefully sealed and docketed; the address — which I read — being, "To H. M.'s Minister and Envoy at —, by the Hon. Grey Buller, Attaché, &c." So, then, this was one of the Young Guard of Diplomacy, one of those sucking Talleyrands, which form the hope of the Foreign-Office and the terror of middle-class English abroad.

"Do you mind my smoking?" asked he, abruptly, as he scraped his lucifer match against the roof of the carriage, showing, by the promptitude of his action, how little he cared for my reply.

"I never smoke, sir, except in the carriages reserved for smokers," was my rebukeful answer.

"And I always do," said he, in a very easy tone.

Not condescending to notice this rude rejoinder, I

drew forth my newspaper, and tried to occupy myself with its contents.

"Anything new?" asked he, abruptly.

"Not that I am aware, sir. I was about to consult the paper."

"What paper is it?"

"It is the *Banner*, sir, at your service," said I, with a sort of sarcasm.

"Rascally print — a vile, low, radical, mill-owning organ. Pitch it away!"

"Certainly not, sir. Being for *me* and *my* edification, I will beg to exercise my own judgment as to how I deal with it."

"It's deuced low, that's what it is, and that's exactly the fault of all our daily papers. Their tone is vulgar; they reflect nothing of the opinions one hears in society. Don't you agree with me?"

I gave a sort of muttering dissent, and he broke in quickly,

"Perhaps not; it's just as likely *you* would not think them low, but take *my* word for it, *I'm* right."

I shook my head negatively, without speaking.

"Well, now," cried he, "let us put the thing to the test. Read out one of those leaders. I don't care which, or on what subject. Read it out, and I pledge myself to show you at least one vulgarism, one flagrant outrage on good breeding, in every third sentence."

"I protest, sir," said I, haughtily, "I shall do no such thing. I have come here neither to read aloud nor take up the defence of the public press."

"I say, look out!" cried he; "you'll smash something in that bag you're kicking there. If I don't mistake, it's Bohemian glass. No, no; all right," said he, examining the number, "it's only Yarmouth bloaters."

"I imagined these contained despatches, sir," said I, with a look of what he ought to have understood as withering scorn.

"You did, did you?" cried he, with a quick laugh. "Well, I'll bet you a sovereign I make a better guess about *your* pack than you've done about *mine*."

"Done, sir; I take you," said I, quickly.

"Well; you're in cutlery, or hardware, or lace goods, or ribbons, or alpaca cloth, or drugs, ain't you?"

"I am not, sir," was my stern reply.

"Not a bagman?"

"Not a bagman, sir."

"Well, you're an usher in a commercial academy, or 'our own correspondent,' or a telegraph clerk?"

"I'm none of these, sir. And I now beg to remind you, that instead of one guess, you have made about a dozen."

"Well, you've won, there's no denying it," said he, taking a sovereign from his waistcoat pocket and handing it to me. "It's deuced odd how I should be mistaken. I'd have sworn you were a bagman!" But for the impertinence of these last words I should have declined to accept his lost bet, but I took it now as a sort of vindication of my wounded feelings. "Now it's all over and ended," said he, calmly, "what are you?"

I don't ask out of any impertinent curiosity, but that I hate being foiled in a thing of this kind. What are you?"

"I'll tell you what I am, sir," said I, indignantly, for now I was outraged beyond endurance — "I'll tell you, sir, what I am, and what I feel myself — one singularly unlucky in a travelling companion."

"Bet you a five-pound note you're not," broke he in. "Give you six to five on it, in anything you like."

"It would be a wager almost impossible to decide, sir."

"Nothing of the kind. Let us leave it to the first pretty woman we see at the station, the guard of the train, the fellow in the pay-office, the stoker if you like."

"I must own, sir, that you express a very confident opinion of your case."

"Will you bet?"

"No, sir, certainly not."

"Well, then, shut up, and say no more about it. If a man won't back his opinion, the less he says the better."

I lay back in my place at this, determined that no provocation should induce me to exchange another word with him. Apparently, he had not made a like resolve, for he went on: "It's all bosh about appearances being deceptive, and so forth. They say 'not all gold that glitters;' my notion is, that with a fellow who really knows life, no disguise that was

ever invented will be successful: the way a man wears his hair" — here he looked at mine — "the sort of gloves he has, if there be anything peculiar in his waistcoat, and, above all, his boots. I don't believe the devil was ever more revealed in his hoof than a snob by his shoes." A most condemnatory glance at my extremities accompanied this speech.

"Must I endure this sort of persecution all the way to Dover?" was the question I asked of my misery.

"Look out, you're on fire!" said he, with a dry laugh. And, sure enough, a spark from his cigarette had fallen on my trousers, and burned a round hole in them.

"Really, sir," cried I, in passionate warmth, "your conduct becomes intolerable."

"Well, if I knew you preferred being singed, I'd have said nothing about it. What's this station here? Where's your 'Bradshaw?'"

"I have got no 'Bradshaw,' sir," said I, with dignity.

"No 'Bradshaw!' A bagman without 'Bradshaw!' Oh, I forgot, you ain't a bagman. Why are we stopping here? something smashed, I suspect. Eh! what! isn't that she? Yes, it is! Open the door! — let me out, I say! Confound the lock! — let me out!" While he uttered these words, in an accent of the wildest impatience, I had but time to see a lady, in deep mourning, pass on to a carriage in front, just as, with a preliminary snort, the train shook, then backed, and at

last set out on its thundering course again. "Such a stunning fine girl!" said he, as he lighted a fresh cigar; "saw her just as we started, and thought I'd run her to earth in this carriage. Precious mistake I made, eh, wasn't it? All in black — deep black — and quite alone!"

I had to turn towards the window, not to let him perceive how his words agitated me, for I felt certain it was Miss Herbert he was describing, and I felt a sort of revulsion to think of the poor girl being subjected to the impertinence of this intolerable puppy.

"Too much style about her for a governess; and yet, somehow, she wasn't, so to say — you know what I mean — she wasn't altogether *that*; looked frightened, and people of real class never look frightened."

"The daughter of a clergyman, probably," said I, with a tone of such reproof as I hoped must check all levity.

"Or a flash maid! some of them, now-a-days, are wonderful swells; they've got an art of dressing, and making-up that is really surprising."

"I have no experience of the order, sir," said I, gravely.

"Well, so I should say. *Your* beat is in the haberdashery or hosiery line, eh?"

"Has it not yet occurred to you, sir," asked I, sternly, "that an acquaintanceship brief as ours should exclude personalities, not to say —" I wanted to add "impertinences," but his grey eyes were turned full on

me with an expression so peculiar, that I faltered, and could not get the word out.

"Well, go on — out with it: not to say what?" said he, calmly.

I turned my shoulder towards him, and nestled down into my place.

"There's a thing, now," said he, in a tone of the coolest reflection — "there's a thing, now, that I never could understand, and I have never met the man to explain it. Our nation, as a nation, is just as plucky as the French — no one disputes it; and yet take a Frenchman of *your* class — the *commis-voyageur*, or anything that way — and you'll just find him as prompt on the point of honour as the best noble in the land. He never utters an insolent speech without being ready to back it."

I felt as if I were choking, but I never uttered a word.

"I remember meeting one of those fellows — traveller for some house in the wine trade — at Avignon. It was at table d'hôte, and I said something slighting about Communism, and he replied, 'Monsieur, je suis Fourieriste, and you insult me.' Thereupon, he sent me his card by the waiter — 'Paul Deloge, for the house of Gougou, père et fils.' I tore it, and threw it away, saying, 'I never drink Bordeaux wines.' 'What do you say to a glass of Hermitage, then?' said he, and flung the contents of his own in my face. Wasn't that very ready? — I call it as neat a thing as could be."

"And you bore that outrage," said I, in triumphant delight; "you submitted to a flagrant insult like that at a public table?"

"I don't know what you call 'bearing it,'" said he; "the thing was done, and I had only to wipe my face with my napkin."

"Nothing more?" said I, sneeringly.

"We went out, afterwards, if you mean *that*," said he, quietly, "and he ran me through here." As he spoke, he proceeded, in leisurely fashion, to unbutton the wrist of his shirt, and baring his arm midway, showed me a pinkish cicatrice of considerable extent. "It went, the doctor said, within a hair's breadth of the artery."

I made no comment upon this story. From the moment I heard it, I felt as though I was travelling with the late Mr. Palmer, of Rugeley. I was, as it were, in the company of one who never would have scrupled to dispose of me, at any moment and in any way that his fancy suggested. My code respecting the Duel was to regard it as the last, the very last, appeal in the direst emergency of dishonour. The men who regarded it as the settlement of slight differences, I deemed assassins. They were no more safe associates for peaceful citizens than a wolf was a meet companion for a flock of Southdowns. The more I ruminated on this theme, the more indignant grew my resentment, and the question assumed the shape of asking, "Is the great mass of mankind to be hectorred and bullied by some half-dozen scoundrels with skill

at 'the small sword?" Little knew I that in the ardour of my indignation I had uttered these words aloud — spoken them with an earnest vehemence, looking my fellow-traveller full in the face, and frowning.

"Scoundrel is strong, eh?" said he, slowly; "*very* strong!"

"Who spoke of a scoundrel?" asked I, in terror, for his confounded calm, cold manner made my very blood run chilled.

"Scoundrel is exactly the sort of word," added he, deliberately, "that once uttered can only be expiated in one way. You do not give me the impression of a very bright individual, but certainly you can understand so much."

I bowed a dignified assent; my heart was in my mouth as I did it, and I could not, to save my life, have uttered a word. My predicament was highly perilous; and all incurred by what? — that passion for adventure that had led me forth out of a position of easy obscurity into a world of strife, conflict, and difficulty. Why had I not stayed at home? What foolish infatuation had ever suggested to me the Quixotism of these wanderings? Blondel had done it all. Were it not for Blondel, I had never met Father Dyke, talked myself into a stupid wager, lost what was not my own; in fact, every disaster sprang out of the one before it, just as twig adheres to branch and branch to trunk. Shall I make a clean breast of it, and tell my companion my whole story? Shall I ex-

plain to him that at heart I am a creature of the kindest impulses and most generous sympathies, that I overflow with good intentions towards my fellows, and that the problem I am engaged to solve is how shall I dispense most happiness? Will he comprehend me? Has he a nature to appreciate an organisation so fine and subtle as mine? Will he understand that the fairy who endows us with our gifts at birth is reckoned to be munificent when she withholds only one high quality, and with me that one was courage? I mean the coarse, vulgar, combative sort of courage that makes men prizefighters and bargees, for as to the grander species of courage, I imagine it to be my distinguishing feature.

The question is, will he give me a patient hearing, for my theory requires nice handling, and some delicacy in the developing. He may cut me short in his bluff, abrupt way, and say, "Out with it, old fellow, you want to sneak out of this quarrel." What am I to reply? I shall rejoin: "Sir, let us first inquire if it be a quarrel. From the time of Atrides down to the Crimean war, there has not been one instance of a conflict that did not originate in misconceptions, and has not been prolonged by delusions! Let us take the Peloponnesian war." A short grunt beside me here cut short my argumentation. He was fast, sound asleep, and snoring loudly. My thoughts at once suggested escape. Could I but get away I fancied I could find space in the world, never again to see myself his neighbour.

The train was whirling along between deep chalk cuttings, and at a furious pace; to leap out was certain death. But was not the same fate reserved for me if I remained? At last I heard the crank-crank of the break! We were nearing a station; the earth walls at either side receded; the view opened; a spire of a church, trees, houses appeared; and our speed diminishing, we came bumping, throbbing, and snorting into a little trim garden-like spot, that at the moment seemed to me a paradise.

I beckoned to the guard to let me out — to do it noiselessly I slipped a shilling into his hand. I grasped my knapsack and my wrapper, and stole furtively away. Oh, the happiness of that moment as the door closed without awakening him!

"Anywhere — any carriage — what class you please," muttered I. "There, yonder," broke I in, hastily — "where that lady in mourning has just got in."

"All full there, sir," replied the man; "step in here." And away we went.

My compartment contained but one passenger; he wore a gold band round his oil-skin cap, and seemed the captain of a mail steamer, or Admiralty agent; he merely glanced at me as I came in, and went on reading his newspaper.

"Going north, I suppose?" said he, bluntly, after a pause of some time. "Going to Germany?"

"No," said I, rather astonished at his giving me this destination. "I'm for Brussels."

"We shall have a rough night of it, outside; glass is falling suddenly, and the wind has chopped round to the south'ard and east'ard!"

"I'm sorry for it," said I. "I'm but an indifferent sailor."

"Well, I'll tell you what to do: just turn into my cabin, you'll have it all to yourself; lie down flat on your back the moment you get aboard; tell the steward to give you a strong glass of brandy-and-water — the captain's brandy say, for it is rare old stuff, and a perfect cordial, and my name ain't Slidders if you don't sleep all the way across."

I really had no words for such unexpected generosity; how was I to believe my ears at such a kind proposal of a perfect stranger. Was it anything in my appearance that could have marked me out as an object for these attentions? "I don't know how to thank you enough," said I, in confusion; "and when I think that we meet now for the first time ——"

"What does that signify," said he, in the same short way. "I've met pretty nigh all of you by this time. I've been a matter of eleven years on this station!"

"Met pretty nigh all of us!" What does that mean? Who and what are we? He can't mean the Pottses, for I'm the first who ever travelled even thus far! But I was not given leisure to follow up the inquiry, for he went on to say, how in all that time of eleven years he had never seen threatenings of a worse night than that before us.

"Then why venture out?" asked I, timidly.

"They must have the bags over there, that's the reason," said he, curtly; "besides, who's to say when he won't meet dirty weather at sea — one takes rough and smooth in this life, eh?"

The observation was not remarkable for originality, but I liked it. I like the reflective turn, no matter how beaten the path it may select for its exercise.

"It's a short trip — some five or six hours at most," said he; "but it's wonderful what ugly weather one sees in it. It's always so in these narrow seas."

"Yes," said I, concurringly, "these petty channels, like the small events of our life, are often the sources of our greatest perils."

He gave a little short grunt: it might have been assent, and it might possibly have been a rough protest against further moralising; at all events, he resumed his paper, and read away without speaking. I had time to examine him well, now, at my leisure, and there was nothing in his face that could give me any clue to the generous nature of his offer to me. No, he was a hard-featured, weather-beaten, rather stern sort of man, verging on fifty-seven or eight. He looked neither impulsive nor confiding, and there was in the shape of his mouth, and the curve of the lines around it, that peremptory and almost cruel decision that marks the sea captain. "Well," thought I, "I must seek the explanation of the riddle elsewhere. The secret sympathy that moved him must have its root in *me*; and, after all, history has never told that the

dolphins who were charmed by Orpheus were peculiar dolphins, with any special fondness for music, or an ear for melody; they were ordinary creatures of the deep — fish, so to say, taken “*ex-medio acervo*” of delphinity. The marvel of their captivation lay in the spell of the enchanter. It was the thrilling touch of *his* fingers, the tasteful elegance of *his* style, the voluptuous enthrallment of the sounds *he* awakened, that worked the miracle. This man of the sea has, therefore, been struck by something in my air, bearing or address; one of those mysterious sympathies which are the hidden motives that guide half our lives, has drawn him to me, and he has said to himself, ‘I like that man. I have met more pretentious people, I have seen persons who desire to dominate and impose more than he, but there is that about him that, somehow, appeals to the instincts of my nature, and I can say I feel myself his friend already.’”

As I worked at my little theory, with all the ingenuity I knew how to employ on such occasions, I perceived that he had put up his newspaper, and was gathering together, in old traveller fashion, the odds and ends of his baggage.

“Here we are,” said he, as we glided into the station, “and in capital time, too. Don’t trouble yourself about your traps. My steward will be here presently, and take all your things down to the packet along with my own. Our steam is up, so lose no time in getting aboard.”

I had never less inclination to play the loiterer.

The odious *attaché* was still in my neighbourhood, and until I had got clear out of his reach I felt anything but security. *He*, I remembered, was for Calais, so that, by taking the Ostend boat, I was at once separating myself from his detestable companionship. I not only, therefore, accepted the captain's offer to leave all my effects to the charge of the steward, but no sooner had the train stopped, than I sprang out, hastened through the thronged station, and made at all my speed for the harbour.

Is it to increase the impediments to quitting one's country, and, by interposing difficulties, to give the exile additional occasion to think twice about expatriating himself, that the way from the railroad to the dock at Dover is made so circuitous and almost impossible to discover? Are these obstacles invented in the spirit of those official details which make banns on the church-door, and a delay of three weeks precede a marriage? as though to say, Halt, impetuous youth, and bethink you whither you are going! Are these amongst the wise precautions of a truly paternal rule? If so, they must occasionally even transcend the original intention, for when I reached the pier, the packet had already begun to move, and it was only by a vigorous leap that I gained the paddle-box, and thus scrambled on board.

"Like every one of you," growled out my weather-beaten friend; "always within an ace of being left behind."

"Every one of us!" muttered I. "What can he

have known of the Potts family, that he dares to describe us, thus characteristically? And who ever presumed to call us loiterers or sluggards?"

"Step down below, as I told you," whispered he. "It's a dirty night, and we shall have bucketing weather outside." And with this friendly hint I at once complied, and stole down the ladder. "Show that gentleman into my state-room, steward," called he out from above. "Mix him something warm, and look after him."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the brisk reply, as the bustling man of brandy and basins threw open a small door, and ushered me into a little den, with a mingled odour of tar, Stilton, and wet mackintoshes. "All to yourself here sir," said he, and vanished.

CHAPTER XI.

I TAKE it for granted that all special "charities" have had their origin in some specific suffering. At least I can aver that my first thought on landing at Ostend was, Why has no great philanthropist thought of establishing such an institution as a Refuge for the Sea-sick? I declare this publicly, that if I ever become rich — a consummation which, looking to the general gentleness of my instincts, the wide benevolence of my nature, and the kindliness of my temperament, mankind might well rejoice at — if, I repeat, I ever become rich, one of the first uses of my affluence will be to endow such an establishment. I will place it in some one of our popular ports, say Southampton. Surrounded with all the charms of inland scenery, rich in every rustic association, the patient shall never be reminded of the scene of his late sufferings. A velvety turf to stroll on, with a leafy shade above his head, the mellow lowing of cattle in his ears, and the fragrant odours of meadow-sweet and hawthorn around, I would recal the sufferer from the dread memories of the slippery deck, the sea-washed stairs, or the sleepy state-room. For the rattle of cordage, and the hoarse trumpet of the skipper, I would substitute the song of the thrush or the blackbird; and, instead of the thrice

odious steward and his basin, I would have trim maidens of pleasing aspect to serve him with syllabubs. I will not go on to say the hundred devices I would employ to cheat memory out of a gloomy record, for I treasure the hope that I may yet live to carry out my theory and have a copyright in my invention.

It was with sentiments deeply tinged by the above that I tottered, rather than walked, towards the Hôtel Royal. It was a bright moonlight night, and, as if in mockery of the weather outside, as still and calm as might be. Many a picturesque effect of light and shade met me as I went: quaint old gables flaring in a strong flood of moonlight, showed outlines the strangest and oddest; twinkling lamps shone out of tall, dark-sided old houses, from which strains of music came plaintively enough in the night air; the sounds of a prolonged revel rose loudly out of that deep-pillared château-like building in the Place, and in the quiet alley adjoining, I could catch the low song of a mother as she tried to sing her baby to sleep. It was all human in every touch and strain of it. And did I not drink it in with rapture? Was it not in a transport of gratitude that I thanked Fortune for once again restoring me to land? "O Earth, Earth!" says the Greek poet, "how art thou interwoven with that nature that first came from thee!" Thus musing, I reached the inn, where, though the hour was a late one, the household was all active and astir.

"Many passengers arrived, waiter?" said I, in the

easy, careless voice of one who would not own to seasickness.

"Very few, sir; the severe weather has deterred several from venturing across."

"Any ladies?"

"Only one, sir; and, poor thing, she seems to have suffered fearfully. She had to be carried from the boat, and when she tried to walk upstairs, she almost fainted. There might have been some agitation, however, in that, for she expected some one to have met her here; and when she heard that he had not arrived, she was completely overcome."

"Very sad, indeed," said I, examining the *carte* for supper.

"Oh yes, sir; and being in deep mourning, too, and a stranger away for the first time from her country."

I started, and felt my heart bounding against my side.

"What was it you said about deep mourning, and being young and beautiful?" asked I, eagerly.

"Only the mourning, sir — it was only the mourning I mentioned; for she kept her veil close down, and would not suffer her face to be seen."

"Bashful as beautiful! modest as she is fair!" muttered I. "Do you happen to know whither she is going?"

"Yes, sir; her luggage is marked 'Brussels.'"

"It is she! It is herself!" cried I, in rapture, as I

turned away, lest the fellow should notice my emotion. "When does she leave this?"

"She seems doubtful, sir; she told the landlady that she is going to reside at Brussels; but never having been abroad before, she is naturally timid about travelling even so far alone."

"Gentle creature, why should she be exposed to such hazards? Bring me some of this fricandeau with chicory, waiter, and a pint of Beaune; fried potatoes, too. — Would that I could tell her to fear nothing," thought I. "Would that I could just whisper, 'Potts is here; Potts watches over you; Potts will be that friend, that brother, that should have come to meet you! Sleep soundly, and with a head at ease. You are neither friendless nor forsaken!'" I feel I must be naturally a creature of benevolent instincts; for I am never so truly happy as when engaged in a work of kindness. Let me but suggest to myself a labour of charity, some occasion to sorrow with the afflicted, to rally the weak-hearted and to succour the wretched, and I am infinitely more delighted than by all the blandishments of what is called "society." Men have their allotted parts in life, just as certain fruits are meet for certain climates. Mine was the grand comforting line. Nature meant me for a consoler. I have none of those impulsive temperaments which make what are called jolly fellows. I have no taste for those excesses which go by the name of conviviality. I can, it is true, be witty, anecdotic, and agreeable; I can spice conversation with epigram, and illustrate

argument by apt example; but my forte is tenderness.

"Is not this veal a little tough, waiter?" said I, in gentle remonstrance.

"Monsieur is right," said he, bowing; "but if a morsel of cold pheasant would be acceptable — mademoiselle, the lady in mourning, has just taken a wing of it —"

"Bring it directly. — Oh, ecstasy of ecstasies! We are then, as it were, supping together — served from the same dish! — May I have the honour?" said I, filling out a glass of wine and bowing respectfully and with an air of deep devotion across the table. The pheasant was exquisite, and I ate with an epicurean enjoyment. I called for another pint of Beaune, too. It was an occasion for some indulgence, and I could not deny myself. No sooner had the waiter left me alone, than I burst into an expansive acknowledgment of my happiness. "Yes, Potts," said I, "you are richer in that temperament of yours than if you owned half California. That boundless wealth of good intentions is a well no pumping can exhaust. Go on doing imaginary good for ever. You are never the poorer for all the orphans you support, all the distresses you relieve. You rescue the mariner from shipwreck without wetting your feet. You charge at the head of a squadron without the peril of a scratch. All blessed be the gift which can do these things!"

You call these delusions; but is it a delusion to be a king, to deliver a people from slavery, to carry

succour to a drowning crew? I have done all of these; that is, I have gone through every changeable mood of hope and fear that accompanies these actions, sipping my glass of Beaune between whiles.

When I found myself in my bedroom I had no inclination for sleep; I was in a mood of enjoyment too elevated for mere repose. It was so delightful to be no longer at sea, to feel rescued from the miseries of the rocking ship and the reeking cabin, that I would not lose the rapture of forgetfulness. I was in the mood for great things, too, if I only knew what they were to be. "Ah!" thought I, suddenly, "I will write to *her*. She shall know that she is not the friendless and forsaken creature that she deems herself; she shall hear that, though separated from home, friends, and country, there is one near to watch over and protect her, and that Potts devotes himself to her service." I opened my desk, and in all the impatience of my ardour began: —

"'DEAR MADAM' — Quære: Ought I to say 'dear'? We are not acquainted, and can I presume upon the formula that implies acquaintanceship? No. I must omit 'dear;' and then 'Madam' looks fearfully stern and rigid, particularly when addressed to a young unmarried lady; she is certainly not 'Madam' yet, surely. I can't begin 'Miss.' What a language is ours! How cruelly fatal to all the tenderer emotions is a dialect so matter-of-fact and formal. If I could only start with 'Gentilissima Signora,' how I could get on! What an impulse would the words lend me! What 'way on me'

would they impart for what was to follow! In our cast-metal tongue there is nothing for it but the third person: 'The undersigned has the honour,' &c., &c. This is chilling — it is positively repulsive. Let me see, will this do? —

“The gentleman who was fortunate enough to render you some trivial service at the Milford station two days ago, having accidentally learned that you are here and unprovided with a protector, in all humility offers himself to afford you every aid and counsel in his power. No stranger to the touching interest of your life, deeply sensible of the delicacy that should surround your steps, if you deign to accept his devoted service, he will endeavour to prove himself, by every sentiment of respect, your most faithful, most humble, and most grateful servant.

“P.S. — His name is Potts.”

“Yes, all will do but the confounded postscript. What a terrible bathos — ‘His name is Potts!’ What if I say: ‘One word of reply is requested, addressed to Algernon Sydney Pottinger, at this hotel?’”

I made a great many copies of this document, always changing something as I went. I felt the importance of every word, and fastidiously pondered over each expression I employed. The bright sun of morning broke in at last upon my labours and found me still at my desk, still composing. All done, I lay down and slept soundly.

“Is she gone, waiter?” said I, as he entered my room with hot water. “Is she gone?”

"Who, sir?" asked he, in some astonishment.

"The lady in black, who came over in the last mail packet from Dover; the young lady in deep mourning, who arrived all alone."

"No, sir. She has sent all round the hotels this morning to enquire after some one who was to have met her here, but apparently without success."

"Give her this; place it in her own hand, and, as you are leaving the room, say, in a gentle voice: 'Is there an answer, mademoiselle?' You understand?"

"Well, I believe I do," said he, significantly, as he slyly pocketed the half-Napoleon fee I had tendered for his acceptance.

Now the fellow had thrown into his countenance — a painfully astute and cunning face it was — one of those expressive looks which actually made me shudder. It seemed to say, "This is a conspiracy, and we are both in it."

"You are not for a moment to suppose," said I, hurriedly, "that there is one syllable in that letter which could compromise *me*, or wound the delicacy of the most susceptible."

"I am convinced that monsieur has written it with most consummate skill," said he, with a supercilious grin, and left the room.

How I detest the familiarity of a foreign waiter! The fellows cannot respond to the most ordinary question without an affectation of showing off their immense acuteness and knowledge of life. It is their

eternal boast how they read people, and with what an instinctive subtlety they can decipher all the various characters that pass before them. Now this impertinent lacquey, who is to say what has he not imputed to me? Utterly incapable as such a creature must necessarily be of the higher and nobler motives that sway men of my order, he will doubtless have ascribed to me the most base and degenerate motives.

I was wrong in speaking one word to the fellow. I might have said, "Take that note to Number Fourteen, and ask if there be an answer;" or better still if I had never written at all, but merely sent in my card to ask if the lady would vouchsafe to accord me an audience of a few minutes. Yes, such would have been the discreet course; and then I might have trusted to my manner, my tact, and a certain something in my general bearing, to have brought the matter to a successful issue. While I thus meditated, the waiter re-entered the room, and, cautiously closing the door, approached me with an ostentatious pretence of secrecy and mystery.

"I have given her the letter," said he in a whisper.

"Speak up!" said I, severely; "what answer has the lady given?"

"I think you'll get the answer presently," said he, with a sort of grin that actually thrilled through me.

"You may leave the room," said I, with dignity, for I saw how the fellow was actually revelling in the enjoyment of my confusion.

"They were reading it over together for the third time when I came away," said he, with a most peculiar look.

"Whom do you mean? who are they that you speak of?"

"The gentleman that she was expecting. He came by the 9.40 train from Brussels. Just in time for your note." As the wretch uttered these words, a violent ringing of bells resounded along the corridor, and he rushed out without waiting for more.

I turned in haste to my note-book; various copies of my letter were there, and I was eager to recal the expressions I had employed in addressing her. Good Heavens! what had I really written? Here were scraps of all sorts of absurdity; poetry, too! verses to the "Fair Victim of a recent War," with a number of rhymes for the last word, such as "low," "snow," "mow," &c. — all evidences of composition under difficulty.

While I turned over these rough copies, the door opened, and a large, red-faced, stern-looking man, in a suit of red-brown tweed and with a heavy stick in his hand, entered; he closed the door leisurely after him, and I half thought that I saw him also turn the key in the lock. He advanced towards me with a deliberate step, and, in a voice measured as his gait, said,

"I am Mr. Jopplyn, sir — I am Mr. Christopher Jopplyn."

"I am charmed to hear it, sir," said I, in some con-

fusion, for, without the vaguest conception of wherefore, I suspected lowering weather ahead.

"May I offer you a chair, Mr. Jopplyn? Won't you be seated? We are going to have a lovely day, I fancy — a great change after yesterday."

"Your name, sir," said he, in the same solemnity as before — "your name I apprehend to be Porringer?"

"Pottinger, if you permit me; Pottinger, not Porringer."

"It shall be as you say, sir: I am indifferent what you call yourself." He heaved something that sounded like a hoarse sigh, and proceeded: "I have come to settle a small account that stands between us. Is that document your writing?" As he said this, he drew, rather theatrically, from his breast-pocket the letter I had just written, and extended it towards me. "I ask, sir — and I mean you to understand that I will suffer no prevarication — is that document in your writing?"

I trembled all over as I took it, and for an instant I determined to disavow it; but in the same brief space I bethought me that my denial would be in vain. I then tried to look boldly, and brazen it out; I fancied to laugh it off as a mere pleasantry, and, failing in courage for each of these, I essayed, as a last resource, the argumentative and discussional line, and said,

"If you will favour me with an indulgent hearing for a few minutes, Mr. Jopplyn, I trust to explain to your complete satisfaction, the circumstances of that epistle."

"Take five, sir — five," said he, laying a ponderous

silver watch on the table as he spoke, and pointing to the minute hand.

"Really, sir," said I, stung by the peremptory and dictatorial tone he assumed, "I have yet to learn that intercourse between gentlemen is to be regulated by clockwork, not to say that I have to inquire by what right you ask me for this explanation."

"One minute gone," said he, solemnly.

"I don't care if there were fifty," said I, passionately. "I disclaim all pretension of a perfect stranger to obtrude himself upon me, and by the mere assumption of a pompous manner and an imposing air, to enquire into my private affairs."

"There are two!" said he, with the same solemnity.

"Who is Mr. Jopplyn — what is he to me?" cried I, in increased excitement, "that he presents himself in my apartment like a commissary of police? Do you imagine, sir, because I am a young man, that this — this — impertinence" — Lord what a gulp it cost me — "is to pass unpunished? Do you fancy that a red beard and a heavy walking-cane are to strike terror into me? You may think, perhaps, that I am unarmed —"

"Three!" said he, with a bang of his stick on the floor, that made me actually jump with the stick.

"Leave the room, sir," said I. "It is my pleasure to be alone — the apartment is mine — I am the proprietor here. A very little sense of delicacy, a very small amount of good breeding, might show you, that when a gentleman declines to receive company,

when he shows himself indisposed to the society of strangers ——”

“One minute more, now,” said he, in a low growl, while he proceeded to button up his coat to the neck, and make preparation for some coming event.

My heart was in my mouth; I gave a glance at the window; it was the third story, and a leap out would have been fatal. What would I not have given for one of those weapons I had so proudly proclaimed myself possessed of. There was not even a poker in the room. I made a spring at the bell-rope, and before he could interpose, gave one pull that, though it brought down the cord, resounded through the whole house.

“Time is up, Porringer,” said he, slowly, as he replaced the watch in his pocket, and grasped his murderous-looking cane.

There was a large table in the room, and I entrenched myself at once behind this, armed with a light cane chair, while I screamed murder in every language I could command. Failing to reach me across the table, my assailant tried to dodge me by false starts, now at this side, now at that. Though a large fleshy man, he was not inactive, and it required all my quickness to escape him. These manœuvres being unsuccessful, he very quickly placed a chair beside the table and mounted upon it. I now hurled my chair at him; he warded off the blow and rushed on; with one spring I bounded under the table, reappearing at the opposite side just as he had reached mine. These tactics we

now pursued for several minutes, when my enemy suddenly changed his attack, and descending from the table, he turned it on edge: the effort required strength. I seized the moment and reached the door; I tore it open in some fashion, gained the stairs — the court — the streets — and ran ever onward with the wildness of one possessed with no time for thought, nor any knowledge to guide; I turned left and right, choosing only the narrowest lanes that presented themselves, and at last came to a dead halt at an open drawbridge, where a crowd stood waiting to pass.

"How is this? What's all the hurry for? Where are you running this fashion?" cried a well-known voice. I turned, and saw the skipper of the packet.

"Are you armed? Can you defend me?" cried I, in terror; "or shall I leap in and swim for it?"

"I'll stand by you. Don't be afraid, man," said he, drawing my arm within his; "no one shall harm you. Were they robbers?"

"No, worse — assassins!" said I, gulping, for I was heartily ashamed of my terror, and determined to show "cause why" in the plural.

"Come in here, and have a glass of something," said he, turning into a little cabaret, with whose penetralia he seemed not unfamiliar. "You're all safe here," said he, as he closed the door of a little room. "Let's hear all about it, though I half guess the story already."

I had no difficulty in perceiving, from my companion's manner, that he believed some sudden shock

had shaken my faculties, and that my intellects were for the time deranged; nor was it very easy for me to assume sufficient calm to disabuse him of his error, and assert my own perfect coherency. "You have been out for a lark," said he, laughingly. "I see it all. You have been at one of those tea-gardens and got into a row with some stout Fleming. All the young English go through that sort of thing. Ain't I right?"

"Never more mistaken in your life, captain. My conduct since I landed would not discredit a canon of St. Paul's. In fact, all my habits, my tastes, my instincts, are averse to every sort of junketing. I am essentially retiring, sensitive, and, if you will, over fastidious in my choice of associates. My story is simply this." My reader will readily excuse my repeating what is already known to him. It is enough if I say, that the captain, although anything rather than mirthful, held his hand several times over his face, and once laughed out loudly and boisterously.

"You don't say it was Christy Jopplyn, do you?" said he, at last. "You don't tell me it was Jopplyn?"

"The fellow called himself Jopplyn, but I know nothing of him beyond that."

"Why, he's mad jealous about that wife of his; that little woman with the corkscrew curls and the scorbutic face, that came over with us. Oh! you did not see her aboard, you went below at once, I remember; but there was she, in her black ugly, and her old crape shawl ——"

"In mourning?"

"Yes. Always in mourning. She never wears anything else, though Christy goes about in colours, and not particular as to the tint, either."

There came a cold perspiration over me as I heard these words, and perceived that my proffer of devotion had been addressed to a married woman, and the wife of the "most jealous man in Europe."

"And who is this Jopplyn?" asked I, haughtily, and in all the proud confidence of my present security

"He's a railway contractor — a shrewd sort of fellow, with plenty of money, and a good head on his shoulders; sensible on every point except his jealousy."

"The man must be an idiot," said I, indignantly, "to rush indiscriminately about the world with accusations of this kind. Who wants to supplant him? Who seeks to rob him of the affections of his wife?"

"That's all very well, and very specious," said he, gravely, "but if men will deliberately set themselves down at a writing-table, hammering their brains for fine sentiments, and toiling to find grand expressions for their passion, it does not require that a husband should be as jealous as Christy Jopplyn to take it badly. I don't think I'm a rash or a hasty man, but I know what I'd do in such a circumstance."

"And, pray, what would *you* do?" said I, half impertinently.

"I'd just say, 'Look here, young gent, is this balderdash here your hand? Well, now, eat your words. Yes, eat them. I mean what I say. Eat up

that letter, seal and all, or, by my oath, I'll break every bone in your skin!"

"It is exactly what I intend," cried a voice, hoarse with passion; and Jopplyn himself sprang into the room, and dashed at me.

The skipper was a most powerful man, but it required all his strength, and not very gingerly exercised either, to hold off my enraged adversary. "Will you be quiet, Christy?" cried he, holding him by the throat. "Will you just be quiet for one instant, or must I knock you down?"

"Do! do! by all means," muttered I, for I thought if he were once on the ground, I could finish him off with a large pewter measure that stood on the table.

With a rough shake, the skipper had at last convinced the other that resistance was useless, and induced him to consent to a parley.

"Let him only tell *you*," said he, "what he has told *me*, Christy."

"Don't strike, but hear me," cried I; and safe in my stockade behind the skipper, I recounted my mistake.

"And *you* believe all this?" asked Jopplyn of the skipper, when I had finished.

"Believe it — I should think I do! I have known him since he was a child that high, and I'll answer for his good conduct and behaviour."

Heaven bless you for that bail bond, though endorsed in a lie, honest ship-captain! and I only hope I may live to requite you for it.

Jopplyn was appeased; but it was the suppressed wrath of a brown bear rather than the vanquished anger of a man. He had booked himself for something cruel, and he was miserable to be balked. Nor was I myself — I shame to own it — an emblem of perfect forgiveness. I know nothing harder than for a constitutionally timid man, of weak proportions, to forgive the bullying superiority of brute force. It is about the greatest trial human forgiveness can be subjected to; so that when Jopplyn, in a vulgar spirit of reconciliation, proposed that we should both go and dine with him that day, I declined the invitation with a frigid politeness.

"I wish I could persuade you to change your plans," said he, "and let Mrs. J. and myself see you at six."

"I believe I can answer for him that it is impossible," broke in the skipper; while he added in a whisper, "They never *can* afford any delay — they have to put on the steam at high pressure from one end of Europe to t'other."

What could he possibly mean by imputing such haste to my movements, and who were "they" with whom he thus associated me? I would have given worlds to ask, but the presence of Jopplyn prevented me, and so I could simply assent with a sort of foolish laugh, and a muttered "Very true — quite correct."

"Indeed, how you manage to be here, now, I can scarcely imagine," continued the skipper. "The last of yours that went through this took a roll of bread and a cold chicken with him into the train, rather than

halt to eat his supper — but I conclude *you* know best.”

What confounded mystification was passing through his marine intellects I could not fathom. To what guild or brotherhood of impetuous travellers had he ascribed me? Why should I not “take mine ease in mine inn?” All this was very tantalising and very irritating, and pleading a pressing engagement, I took leave of them both, and returned to the hotel.

I was in need of rest and a little composure. The incident of the morning had jarred my nerves and disconcerted me much. But a few hours ago, and life had seemed to me like a flowery meadow, through which, without path or track, one might ramble at will; now, it rather presented the aspect of a vulgar kitchen-garden, fenced in, and divided, and partitioned off, with only a few very stony alleys to walk in. “This boasted civilisation of ours,” exclaimed I, “what is it but snobbery? Our class distinctions — our artificial intercourses — our hypocritical professions — our deference for externals, are they not the flimsiest pretences that ever were fashioned? Why has no man the courage to make short work of these, and see the world as it really is? Why has not some one gone forth, the apostle of frankness and plain speaking, the same to prince as to peasant? What I would like, would be a ramble through the less visited parts of Europe — countries in which civilisation slants in just as the rays of a setting sun steal into a forest at even-

ing. I would buy me a horse. Oh, Blondel," thought I, suddenly, "am I not in search of you? Is it not in the hope to recover you that I am here, and, with you for my companion, am I not content to roam the world, taking each incident of the way with the calm of one who asks little of his fellow-man save a kind word as he passes, and a God speed as he goes?" I knew perfectly that, with any other beast for my "mount," I could not view the scene of life with the same bland composure. A horse that started, that tripped, that shied, reared, kicked, cromed his neck, or even shook himself, as certain of these beasts do, would have kept me in a paroxysm of anxiety and uneasiness, the least adapted of all moods for thoughtfulness and reflection. Like an ill-assorted union, it would have given no time save for squabble and recrimination. But Blondel almost seemed to understand my mission, and lent himself to its accomplishment. There was none of the obtrusive selfishness of an ordinary horse in his ways. He neither asked you to remark the glossiness of his skin, nor the graceful curve of his neck; he did not passage nor curvet. Superior to the petty arts by which vulgar natures present themselves to notice, he felt that destiny had given him a duty, and he did it.

Thus thinking, I returned once more to the spirit which had first sent me forth to ramble, to wander through the world, spectator, not actor; to be with my fellow-men in sympathy, but not in action; to sorrow and rejoice as they did, but, if possible, to understand

life as a drama, in which, so long as I was the mere audience, I could never be painfully afflicted or seriously injured by the catastrophe: a wonderful philosophy, but of which, up to the present, I could not boast any pre-eminent success.

CHAPTER XII.

I GREW impatient to leave Ostend: every association connected with the place was unpleasant. I hope I am not unjust in my estimate of it. I sincerely desire to be neither unjust to men nor cities, but I thought it vulgar and commonplace. I know it is hard for a watering-place to be otherwise; there is something essentially low in the green-baize and bathing-house existence — in that semi-nude sociality, begun on the sands and carried out into deep water, which I cannot abide. I abhor, besides, a lounging population in fancy toilets, a procession of donkeys in scarlet trappings, elderly gentlemen with pocket-telescopes, and fierce old ladies with camp-stools. The worn-out debauchees come to recruit for another season of turtle and whitebait; the half-faded victims of twenty polkas per night, the tiresome politician, pale from a long session, all fiercely bent on fresh diet and sea-breezes, are perfect antipathies to me, and I would rather seek companionship in a Tyrol village than amidst these wounded and missing of a London season.

With all this, I wanted to get away from the vicinity of the Jopplyns — they were positively odious to me. Is not the man who holds in his keeping one scrap of your handwriting which displays you in a

light of absurdity, far more your enemy than the holder of your protested bill? I own I think so. Debt is a very human weakness; like disease, it attacks the best and the noblest amongst us. You may pity the fellow that cannot meet that acceptance, you may be sorry for the anxiety it occasions him, the fruitless running here and there, the protestations, promises, and even lies, he goes through, but no sense of ludicrous scorn mingles with your compassion, none of that contemptuous laughter with which you read a copy of absurd verses or a maudlin love-letter. Imagine the difference of tone in him who says: "That's an old bill of poor Potts's; he'll never pay it now, and I'm sure I'll never ask him." Or, "Just read those lines; would you believe that any creature out of Hanwell could descend to such miserable drivel as that? It was one Potts who wrote it."

I wonder, could I obtain my manuscript from Jopplyn before I started? What pretext could I adduce for the request? While I thus pondered, I packed up my few wearables in my knapsack and prepared for the road. They were, indeed, a very scanty supply, and painfully suggested to my mind the estimate that waiters and hotel-porters must form of their owner. "Cruel world," muttered I, "whose maxim is, 'By their outsides shall ye judge them.' Had I arrived here with a travelling-carriage and a 'fourgon,' what respect and deference had awaited me! how courteous the landlord, how obliging the head waiter! Twenty attentions which could not be charged for in the bill had been shown

me, and even had I, in superb dignity, declined to descend from my carriage while the post-horses were being harnessed, a levee of respectful flunkeys would have awaited my orders. I have no doubt but there must be something very intoxicating in all this homage. The smoke of the hecatombs must have affected Jove as a sort of chloroform, or else he would never have sat there sniffing them for centuries. Are you ever destined to experience these sensations, Potts? Is there a time coming when anxious ears will strain to catch your words, and eyes watch eagerly for your slightest gestures? If such an era should ever come, it will be a great one for the masses of mankind, and an evil one for snobbery. Such a lesson as I will read the world on humility in high places, such an example will I give of one elevated, but uncorrupted, by fortune."

"Let the carriage come to the door," said I, closing my eyes, as I sunk into my chair in reverie. "Tell my people to prepare the entire of the Hôtel de Belle Vue for my arrival, and my own cook to preside in the kitchen."

"Is this to go by the omnibus?" said the waiter, suddenly, on entering my room in haste. He pointed to my humble knapsack.

"Yes," said I, in deep confusion — "yes, that's my luggage — at least, all that I have here at this moment. Where is the bill? Very moderate, indeed," muttered I, in a tone of approval. "I will take care

to recommed your house; attendance prompt, and the wines excellent."

"Monsieur is complimentary," said the fellow with a grin; "he only experimented upon a 'small Beaune' at one-twenty the bottle."

I scowled at him, and he shrank again.

"And this 'objet' is also monsieur's," said he, taking up a small white canvas bag which was enclosed in my railroad wrapper.

"What is it?" cried I, taking it up. I almost fell back as I saw that it was one of the despatch-bags of the Foreign-office, which in my hasty departure from the Dover train I had accidentally carried off with me. There it was, addressed to "Sir Shalley Doubleton, H.M's Envoy and Minister at Hesse-Kalbbratenstadt by the Hon. Grey Buller, Attaché," &c.

Here was not alone what might be construed into a theft, but what it was well possible might comprise one of the gravest offences against the law: it might be high treason itself! Who would ever credit my story, coupled as it was with the fact of my secret escape from the carriage — my precipitate entrance into the first place I could find, not to speak of the privacy I observed by not mixing with the passengers in the mail packet, but keeping myself estranged from all observation in the captain's cabin? Here, too, was the secret of the skipper's politeness to me: he saw the bag, and believed me to be a Foreign-office messenger, and this was his meaning as he said, "I can answer for him he can't delay much here." Yes; this was the

entire mystification by which I obtained his favour, his politeness, and his protection. What was to be done in this exigency? Had the waiter not seen the bag, and with the instincts of his craft calmly perused the address on it, I believe, nay, I am quite convinced, I should have burned it and its contents on the spot. The thought of his evidence against me in the event of a discovery, however, entirely routed this notion, and, after a brief consideration, I resolved to convey the bag to its destination, and trump up the most plausible explanation I could of the way it came into my possession. His excellency, I reasoned, will doubtless be too delighted to receive his despatches to inquire very minutely as to the means by which they were recovered, nor is it quite impossible that he may feel bound to mark my zeal for the public service by some token of recognition. This was a pleasant turn to give to my thoughts, and I took it with all the avidity of my peculiar temperament. "Yes," thought I, "it is just out of trivial incidents like this a man's fortune is made in life. For one man who mounts to greatness by the great entrance and the state staircase, ten thousand slip in by 'la petite Porte.' It is, in fact, only by these chances that obscure genius obtains acknowledgment. How, for example, should this great diplomatist know Potts if some accident should not throw them together? Raleigh flung his laced jacket in a puddle, and for his reward he got a proud Queen's favour. A village apothecary had the good fortune to be visiting the state apartments at the Pa-

vilion when George the Fourth was seized with a fit; he bled him, brought him back to consciousness, and made him laugh by his genial and quaint humour. The king took a fancy to him, named him his physician, and made his fortune. I have often heard it remarked by men who have seen much of life, that nobody, not one, goes through the world without two or three such opportunities presenting themselves. The careless, the indolent, the unobservant, and the idle, either fail to remark, or are too slow to profit by them. The sharp fellows, on the contrary, see in such incidents all that they need to lead them to success. Into which of these categories you are to enter, Potts, let this incident decide."

Having by a reference to my John Murray ascertained the whereabouts of the capital of Hesse-Kalbratenstadt, I took my place at once on the rail for Cologne, reading myself up on its beauty and its belongings as I went. There is, however, such a dreary sameness in these small ducal states, that I am ashamed to say how little I gleaned of anything distinctive in the case before me. The reigning sovereign was of course married to a grand-duchess of Russia, and he lived at a country seat called Ludwig's Lust, or Carl's Lust, as it might be, "took little interest in politics" — how should he? — and "passed much of his time in mechanical pursuits, in which he had attained considerable proficiency;" in other words, he was a middle-aged gentleman, fond of his pipe, and with a taste for carpentry. Some sort of connection with our own

royal family had been the pretext for having a resident minister at his court, though what he was to do when he was there seemed not so easy to say. Even John, glorious John, was puzzled how to make a respectable half-page out of his capital, though there was a dome in the Byzantine style, with an altar-piece by Peter von Grys, the angels in the corner being added afterwards by Hans Lüders; and there was a Hof Theatre, and an excellent inn, the "Schwein," by Kramm, where the sausages of home manufacture were highly recommendable, no less than a table wine of the hosts vineyard, called "Magenschmerzer," and which, Murray adds, would doubtless, if known, find many admirers in England; and lastly, but far from leastly, there was a Musik Garten, where popular pieces were performed very finely by an excellent German band, and to which promenade, all the fashion of the capital nightly resorted.

I give you all these details, respected reader, just as I got them in my "Northern Germany," and not intending to obtrude any further description of my own upon you; for who, I would ask, could amplify upon his Handbook? What remains to be noted after John has taken the inventory? has he forgotten a nail or a saint's shin-bone? With him for a guide, a man may feel that he has done his Europe conscientiously; and though it be hard to treasure up all the hard names of poets, painters, priests, and warriors, it is not worse than botany, and about as profitable.

For the same reason that I have given above, I

spare my reader all the circumstances of my journey, my difficulties about carriage, my embarrassments about steam-boats and cab fares, which were all of the order that Brown and Jones have experienced, are experiencing, and will continue to experience, till the arrival of that millenary period when we shall all converse in any tongue we please.

It was at nightfall that I drove into Kalbbratenstadt, my postilion announcing my advent at the gates, and all the way to the Platz where the inn stood, by a volley of whip-crackings which might have announced a grand-duke or a prima donna. Some casements were hastily opened as we rumbled along, and the guests of a café issued hurriedly into the street to watch us, but these demonstrations over, I gained the "Schwein" without further notice, and descended.

Herr Kramm looked suspiciously at the small amount of luggage of the traveller who arrived by "extra post," but, like an honest German, he was not one to form rash judgments, and so he showed me to a comfortable apartment, and took my orders for supper in all respectfulness. He waited upon me also at my meal, and gave me opportunity for conversation. While I ate my Carbonade mit Kartoffel-Salad, therefore, I learned that, being already nine o'clock, it was far too late an hour to present myself at the English Embassy — for so he designated our minister's residence; that at this advanced period of the night there were but few citizens out of their beds: the ducal candle was always extinguished at half-past eight, and only rois-

terers and revellers kept it up much later. My first surprise over, I owned I liked all this. It smacked of that simple patriarchal existence I had so long yearned after. Let the learned explain it, but there is, I assert, something in the early hours of a people that guarantee habits of simplicity, thrift, and order. It is all very well to say that people can be as wicked at eight in the evening as at two or three in the morning; that crime cares little for the clock, nor does vice respect the chronometer; but does experience confirm this, and are not the small hours notorious for the smallest moralities? The grand-duke, who is fast asleep at nine, is scarcely disturbed by dreams of cruelties to his people. The police minister, who takes his bed-room candle at the same hour, is seldom harassed by devising new schemes of torture for his victims. I suffered my host to talk largely of his town and its people, and probably such a listener rarely presented himself, for he certainly improved the occasion. He assured me, with a gravity that vouched for the conviction, that the capital, though by no means so dear as London or Paris, contained much if not all these more pretentious cities could boast. There was a court, a theatre, a promenade, a public fountain, and a new gaol, one of the largest in all Germany. Jenny Lind had once sung at the opera on her way to Vienna; and to prove how they sympathised in every respect with greater centres of population, when the cholera raged at Berlin, they, too, lost about four hundred of their townsfolk. Lastly, he mentioned, and this boast-

fully, that though neither wanting organs of public opinion, nor men of adequate ability to guide them, the Kalbbrateners had never mixed themselves up in politics, but proudly maintained that calm and dignified attitude which Europe would one day appreciate; that is, if she ever arrived at the crowning knowledge of the benefit of letting her differences be decided by some impartial umpire.

More than once, as I heard him, I muttered to myself, "Potts, this is the very spot you have sought for; here is all the tranquil simplicity of the village, with the elevated culture of a great city. Here are sages and philosophers clad in homespun, Beauty herself in linsey-wolsey. Here there are no vulgar rivalries of riches, no contests in fine clothes, no opposing armies of yellow plush. Men are great by their faculties, not in their flunkeys. How elevated must be the tone of their thoughts, the style of their conversation, and what a lucky accident it was that led you to that goal to which all your wishes and hopes have been converging! — For how much can a man live — a single gentleman like myself — here in your city?" asked I of my host.

He sat down at this, and filling himself a large goblet of my wine — the last in the bottle — he prepared for a lengthy séance. "First of all," said he, "how would he wish to live? Would he desire to mingle in our best circles, equal to any in Europe, to know Herr von Krugwitz, and the Gnädige Frau von Steinhaltz?"

"Well," thought I, "these be fair ambitions." And I said, "Yes, both of them."

"And to be on the list of the court dinners? There are two yearly, one at Easter, the other on his Highness's birthday, whom may providence long protect!"

"To this also might he aspire."

"And to have a stall at the Grand Opera, and a carriage to return visits — twice in carnival time — and to live in a handsome quarter, and dine every day at our table d'hôte there with General von Beulwitz and the Hofrath von Schlafrichter? A life like this is costly, and would scarcely be comprised under two thousand florins a year."

How my heart bounded at the notion of refinement, culture, elevated minds, and polished habits: "science," indeed, and the "musical glasses," all for one hundred and sixty pounds per annum.

"It is not improbable that you will see me your guest for many a day to come," said I, as I ordered another bottle, and of a more generous vintage, to honour the occasion. My host offered no opposition to my convivial projects — nay, he aided them by saying,

"If you have really an appreciation for something super-excellent in wine, and wish to taste what Freiligrath calls 'der Deutschen Nectar,' I'll go and fetch you a bottle."

"Bring it by all means," said I. And away he went on his mission.

"Providence blessed me with two hands," said he,

as he re-entered the room, "and I have brought two flasks of Lieb Herzenthaler."

There is something very artistic in the way your picture-dealer, having brushed away the dust from a Mieris or a Gerard Dow, places the work in a favourite light before you, and then stands to watch the effect on your countenance. So, too, will your man of rare manuscripts and illuminated missals offer to your notice some illegible treasure of the fourth century; but these are nothing to the mysterious solemnity of him who, uncorking a bottle of rare wine, waits to note the varying sensations of your first enjoyment down to your perfect ecstasy.

I tried to perform my part of the piece with credit: I looked long at the amber-coloured liquor in the glass, I sniffed it and smiled approvingly; the host smiled too, and said "Ja." Not another syllable did he utter, but how expressive was that "Ja!" "Ja" meant, "You are right, Potts, it is the veritable wine of 1764, bottled for the Herzog Ludwig's marriage; every drop of it is priceless. Mark the odour how it perfumes the air around us; regard the colour — the golden hair of Venus can alone rival it; see how the oily globules cling to the glass!" "Ja" meant all this, and more.

As I drank off my glass, I was sorely puzzled by the precise expression in which to couch my approval; but he supplied it and said, "Is it not Göttlich?" and I said it *was* Göttlich; and while we finished the two bottles, this solitary phrase sufficed for converse

between us, "Göttlich" being uttered by each as he drained his glass, and "Göttlich" being re-echoed by his companion.

There is great wisdom in reducing our admiration to a word; giving, as it were, a cognate number to our estimate of anything. Wherever we amplify we usually blunder: we employ epithets that disagree, or, in even less questionable taste, soar into extravagances that are absurd. Besides, our moods of highest enjoyment are not such as dispose to talkativeness: the ecstasy that is most enthralling is self-contained. Who on looking at a glorious landscape does not feel the insufferable bathos of the descriptive enthusiast beside him? How grateful would he own himself if he would be satisfied with one word for his admiration. And if one needs this calm repose, this unbroken peace, for the enjoyment of scenery, equally is it applicable to our appreciation of a curious wine. I have no recollection that any further conversation passed between us, but I have never ceased, and most probably never shall cease, to have a perfect memory of the pleasant ramble of my thoughts as I sat there sipping, sipping. I pondered long over a plan of settling down in this place for life, by what means I could realise sufficient to live in that elevated sphere the host spoke of. If Potts père — I mean my father — were to learn that I was received in the highest circles, admitted to all that was most socially exclusive, would he be induced to make an adequate provision for me? He was an ambitious and a worldly man; would he see in these beginnings of mine the seeds of future

greatness? Fathers, I well knew, are splendidly generous to their successful children, and "the poor they send empty away." It is so pleasant to aid him who does not need assistance, and such a hopeless task to be always saving him who *will* be drowned.

My first care, therefore, should be to impress upon my parent the appropriateness of his contributing his share to what already was an accomplished success. "Wishing, as the French say, to make you a part in my triumph, dear father, I write these lines." How I picture him to my mind's eye as he reads this, running frantically about to his neighbours, and saying, "I have got a letter from Algy — strange boy — but as I always foresaw, with great stuff in him, very remarkable abilities. See what he has done! struck out a perfect line of his own in life; just the sort of thing genius alone can do. He went off from this one morning by way of a day's excursion, never returned — never wrote. All my efforts to trace him were in vain. I advertised, and offered rewards, did everything, without success; and now, after all this long interval, comes a letter by this morning's post to tell me that he is well, happy, and prosperous. He is settled, it appears, in a German capital with a hard name, a charming spot, with every accessory of enjoyment in it: men of the highest culture, and women of most graceful and attractive manners; as he himself writes, 'the elegance of a parisian *salon* added to the wisdom of the professor's cabinet.' Here is Algy living with all that is highest in rank and most distinguished in station; the favoured guest of

the prince, the bosom friend of the English minister; his advice sought for, his counsel asked in every difficulty; trusted in the most important state offices, and taken into the most secret councils of the duchy. Though the requirements of his station make heavy demands upon his means, very little help from me will enable him to maintain a position which a few years more will have consolidated into a rank recognised throughout Europe." Would the flintiest of fathers, would the most primitive rock-hearted of parents resist an appeal like this? It is no hand to rescue from the waves is sought, but a little finger to help to affluence. "Of course you'll do it, Potts, and do it liberally; the boy is a credit to you. He will place your name where you never dreamed to see it. What do you mean to settle on him? Above all things, no stinginess; don't disgust him."

I hear these and such-like on every hand; even the most close-fisted and miserly of our acquaintances will be generous of their friend's money; and I think I hear the sage remarks with which they season advice with touching allusions to that well-known ship that was lost for want of a small outlay in tar. "Come down handsomely, Potts," says a resolute man, who has sworn never to pay a sixpence of his son's debts. "What better use can we make of our hoardings than to render our young people happy?" I don't like the man who says this, but I like his sentiments; and I am much pleased when he goes on to remark that "there is no such good investment as what establishes

a successful son. Be proud of the boy, Potts, and thank your stars that he had a soul above senna, and a spirit above sal volatile!"

As I invent all this play of dialogue for myself, and picture the speakers before me, I come at last to a small peevish little fellow named Lynch, a merchant tailor, who lived next door to us, and enjoyed much of my father's confidence. "So, they tell me you have heard from that runaway of yours, Potts. Is it true. What face does he put upon his disgraceful conduct? What became of the livery-stable-keeper's horse? Did he sell him, or ride him to death? A bad business if he should ever come back again, which, of course, he's too wise for. And where is he now, and what is he at?"

"You may read this letter, Mr. Lynch," replies my father; "he is one who can speak for himself." And Lynch reads and sniggers, and reads again. I see him as plainly as if he were but a yard from me. "I never heard of this ducal capital before," he begins, "but I suppose it's like the rest of them — little obscure dens of pretentious poverty, plenty of ceremony, and very little to eat. How did he find out? What brought him there?"

"You have his letter before you, sir," says my parent, proudly. "Algernon Sidney is, I imagine, quite competent to explain what relates to his own affairs."

"Oh, perfectly, perfectly; only that I can't really

make out how he first came to this place, nor what it is that he does there now that he's in it."

My father hastily snatches the letter from his hands, and runs his eye rapidly along to catch the passage which shall confute the objector and cover him with shame and confusion. He cannot find it at once. "It is this. No, it is on this side. Very strange, very singular indeed; but as Algernon must have told me —" Alas! no, father, he has not told you, and for the simple reason that he does not know it himself. For though I mentioned with becoming pride the prominent stations Irishmen now hold in most of the great states of Europe, and pointed to O'Donnel in Spain, Mac Mahon in France, and the Field-Marshal Nugent in Austria, I utterly forgot to designate the high post occupied by Potts in the Duchy of Hesse-Kalbbratenstadt. To determine what this should be was now of imminent importance, and I gave myself up to the solution with a degree of intentness and an amount of concentration that set me off sound asleep.

Yes, benevolent reader, I will confess it, questions of a complicated character have always affected me, as the inside of a letter seems to have struck Tony Lumkin — "all buzz." I start with the most loyal desire to be acute and penetrating; I set myself to my task with as honest a disposition to do my best as ever man did; I say, "Now, Potts, no self-indulgence, no skulking; here is a knotty problem, here is a case for your best faculties in their sharpest exercise;" and if any one come in upon me about ten minutes after

this resolve, he will see a man who could beat Sancho Panza in sleeping!

Of course this tendency has often cost me dearly; I have missed appointments, forgotten assignations, lost friends through it. My character, too, has suffered, many deeming me insupportably indolent, a sluggard quite unfit for any active employment. Others, more mercifully hinting at some "cerebral cause," have done me equal damage; but there happily is an obverse on the medal, and to this somnolency do I ascribe much of the gentleness and all the romance of my nature. It is your sleepy man is ever benevolent, he loves ease and quiet for others as for himself. What he cultivates is the tranquil mood that leads to slumber, and the calm that sustains it. The very operations of the mind in sleep are broken, incoherent, undelineated — just like the waking occupations of an idle man; they are thoughts that cost so little to manufacture, that he can afford to be lavish of them. And now — Good-night!

CHAPTER XIII.

BREAKFAST over, I took a walk through the town. Though in a measure prepared for a scene of unbustling quietude and tranquillity, I must own that the air of repose around, far surpassed all I had imagined. The streets through which I sauntered were grass-grown and untrodden; the shops were but half open; not an equipage, nor even a horseman was to be seen. In the Platz, where a sort of fruit-market was held, a few vendors of grapes, peaches, and melons sat under large crimson umbrellas, but there seemed few purchasers, except a passing schoolboy, carefully scanning the temptations in which he was about to invest his kreutzer.

The most remarkable feature of the place, however, and it is one which, through a certain significance, has always held its place in my memory, was that, go where one would, the palace of the grand-duke was sure to finish the view at one extremity of the street. In fact, every alley converged to this one centre, and the royal residence stood like the governor's chamber in a panopticon gaol. There did my mind for many a day picture him sitting like a huge spider watching the incautious insects that permeated his web. I imagined him fat, indolent, and apathetic, but yet, with

a gaoler's instincts, ever mindful of every stir and movement of the prisoners below. With a very ordinary telescope he must be master of everything that went on, and the humblest incident could not escape his notice. Was it the consciousness of this surveillance that made every one keep the house? Was it the feeling that the "Gross-Herzogliche" eye never left them, that prevented men being abroad in the streets and about their affairs as in other places? I half suspected this, and set to work imagining a state of society thus scanned and scrutinised. But that the general aspect of the town so palpably proclaimed the absence of all trade and industry, I might have compared the whole to a glass hive; but they were all drones that dwell there, there was not one "busy bee" in the whole of them.

While I rambled thus carelessly along, I came in front of a sort of garden fenced from the street by an iron railing. The laurel, and arbutus, and even the oleander, were there, gracefully blending a varied foliage, and contrasting in their luxuriant liberty so pleasantly with the dull uniformity outside. Finding a gate wide open, I strolled in, and gave myself up to the delicious enjoyment of the spot. As I was deliberating whether this was a public garden or not, I found myself before a long, low, villa-like building, with a colonnade in front. Over the entrance was a large shield, which on nearer approach I recognised to contain the arms of England. This, therefore, was the legation, the residence of our minister, Sir Shalley

Doubleton. I felt a very British pride and satisfaction to see our representative lodged so splendidly. With all the taxpayer's sentiment in my heart, I rejoiced to think that he who personated the nation should, in all his belongings, typify the wealth, the style, and the grandeur of England, and in the ardour of this enthusiasm, I hastened back to the inn for the despatch-bag.

Armed with this, and a card, I soon presented myself at the door. On the card I had written, "Mr. Pottinger presents his respectful compliments, and requests his excellency will favour him with an audience of a few minutes for an explanation."

I had made up my mind to state that my servant, in removing my smaller luggage from the train, had accidentally carried off this Foreign Office bag, which, though at considerable inconvenience, I had travelled much out of my way to restore in person. I had practised this explanation as I dressed in the morning, I had twice rehearsed it to an orange-tree in the garden, before which I had bowed till my back ached, and I fancied myself perfect in my part. It would, I confess, have been a great relief to me to have had only the slightest knowledge of the great personage before whom I was about to present myself, to have known was he short or tall, young or old, solemn or easy-mannered, had he a loud voice and an imperious tone, or was he of the soft and silky order of his craft. I'd have willingly entertained his "gentleman" at a moderate repast for some information on these points,

but there was no time for the inquiry, and so I rang boldly at the bell. The door opened of itself at the summons, and I found myself in a large hall with a plaster cast of the Laocoon, and nothing else. I tried several of the doors on either side, but they were all locked. A very handsome and spacious stair of white marble led up from the middle of the hall, but I hesitated about venturing to ascend this, and once more repaired to the bell outside, and repeated my summons. The loud clang re-echoed through the arched hall, the open door gave a responsive shake, and that was all. No one came; everything was still as before. I was rather chagrined at this. The personal inconvenience was less offensive than the feeling how foreigners would comment on such want of propriety, what censures they would pass on such an ill-arranged household. I rang again, this time with an energy that made the door strike some of the plaster from the wall, and, with a noise like cannon, "What the hangman" — I am translating — "is all this?" cried a voice thick with passion; and, on looking up, I saw a rather elderly man, with a quantity of curly yellow hair, frowning savagely on me from the balcony over the stair. He made no sign of coming down, but gazed sternly at me from his eminence.

"Can I see his excellency the minister?" said I, with dignity.

"Not if you stop down there, not if you continue to ring the bell like an alarm for fire, not if you won't take the trouble to come up-stairs."

I slowly began the ascent at these words, pondering what sort of a master such a man must needs have. As I gained the top, I found myself in front of a very short, very fat man, dressed in a suit of striped gingham, like an over-plethoric zebra, and wheezing painfully, in part from asthma, in part from agitation. He began again:

"What the hangman do you mean by such a row? Have you no manners, no education? Where were you brought up that you enter a dwelling-house like a city in storm?"

"Who is this insolent creature that dares to address me in this wise? What ignorant menial can have so far forgotten my rank and his insignificance?"

"I'll tell you all that presently," said he; "there's his excellency's bell." And he bustled away, as fast as his unwieldy size would permit, to his master's room.

I was outraged and indignant. There was I, Potts — no, Pottinger — Algernon Sydney Pottinger — on my way to Italy and Greece, turning from my direct road to consign with safety a despatch-bag which many a less conscientious man would have chucked out of his carriage window and forgotten — there I stood to be insulted by a miserable stone-polishing, floor-scrubbing, carpet-twigging Hausknecht? Was this to be borne? was it to be endured? Was a man of station, family, and attainments, to be the object of such indignity?"

Just as I had uttered this speech aloud, a very gentle voice addressed me, saying:

"Perhaps I can assist you? Will you be good enough to say what you want?"

I started suddenly, looked up, and whom should I see before me but that Miss Herbert, the beautiful girl in deep mourning that I had met at Milford, and who now, in the same pale loveliness, turned on me a look of kind and gentle meaning.

"Do you remember me?" said I, eagerly. "Do you remember the traveller — a pale young man, with a Glengary cap and a plaid overcoat — who met you at Milford?"

"Perfectly," said she, with a slight twitch about the mouth like a struggle against a smile. "Will you allow me to repay you now for your politeness then? Do you wish to see his excellency?"

I'm not very sure what it was I replied, but I know well what was passing through my head. If my thoughts could have spoken, it would have been in this wise:

"Angel of loveliness, I don't care a brass farthing for his excellency. It is not a matter of the slightest moment to me if I never set eyes on him. Let me but speak to you, tell you the deep impression you have made upon my heart; how, in my ardour to serve you, I have already been involved in an altercation that might have cost me my life; how I still treasure up the few minutes I passed beside you as the Elysian dream of all my life ——"

"I am certain, sir," broke she in while I spoke — I repeat, I know not what — "I am certain, sir, that you never came here to mention all this to his excellency."

There was a severe gravity in the way that she said these words that recalled me to myself, but not to any consciousness of what I had been saying; and so, in my utter discomfiture, I blundered out something about the lost despatches and the cause of my coming.

"If you'll wait a moment here," said she, opening a door into a neatly furnished room, "his excellency shall hear of your wish to see him." And before I could answer, she was gone.

I was now alone, but in what wild perplexity and anxiety! How came she here? What could be the meaning of her presence in this place? The minister was an unmarried man, so much my host had told me. How then reconcile this fact with the presence of one who had left England but a few days ago, as some said, to be a governess or a companion? Oh, the agony of my doubts, the terrible agony of my dire misgivings! What a world of iniquity do we live in, what vice and corruption are ever around us! It was but a year or two ago, I remember, that the *Times* newspaper had exposed the nefarious schemes of a wretch who had deliberately invented a plan to entrap those most unprotected of all females. The adventures of this villain had become part of the police literature of Europe. Young and attractive creatures, induced to come abroad by promises of the most seductive kind,

had been robbed by this man of all they possessed, and deserted here and there throughout the Continent. I was so horror-stricken by the terrors my mind had so suddenly conjured up, that I could not acquire the calm and coolness requisite for a process of reasoning. My over-active imagination, as usual, went off with me, clearing obstacles with a sweeping stride, and steeple-chasing through fact as though it were only a gallop over grass land.

"Poor girl, well might you look confused and overwhelmed at meeting me! well might the flush of shame have spread over your neck and shoulders, and well might you have hurried away from the presence of one who had known you in the days of your happy innocence!" I'm not sure that I didn't imagine I had been her playfellow in childhood, and that we had been brought up from infancy together. My mind then addressed itself to the practical question, What was to be done? Was I to turn my head away while this iniquity was being enacted? was I to go on my way, forgetting the seeds of that misery whose terrible fruits must one day be a shame and an open ignominy? or was I to arraign this man, great and exalted as he was, and say to him, "Is it thus you represent before the eyes of the foreigner the virtues of that England we boast to be the model of all morality? Is it thus you illustrate the habits of your order? Do you dare to profane what, by the fiction of diplomacy, is called the soil of your country, by a life that you dare not pursue at home? The Parliament shall hear of it,

the *Times* shall ring with it; that magnificent institution, the common sense of England, long sick of what is called secret diplomacy, shall learn at last to what uses are applied the wiles and snares of this deceitful craft, its extraordinary and its private missions, its hurried messengers with their bags of corruption——”

I was well “into my work,” and was going along slappingly, when a very trim footman, in a nankeen jacket, said:

“If you will come this way, sir, his excellency will see you.”

He led me through three or four *salons* handsomely furnished and ornamented with pictures, the most conspicuous of which, in each room, was a life-sized portrait of the same gentleman, though in a different costume——now in the Windsor uniform, now as a Guardsman, and, lastly, in the full dress of the diplomatic order. I had but time to guess that this must be his excellency, when the servant announced me and retired.

It is in deep shame that I own that the aspect of the princely apartments, the silence, the implied awe of the footman's subdued words as he spoke, had so routed all my intentions about calling his excellency to account, that I stood in his presence timid and abashed. It is an ignoble confession wrung out of the very heart of my snobbery, that no sooner did I find myself before that thin, pale, grey-headed man, who, in a light silk dressing-gown and slippers, sat writing

away, than I gave up my brief and inwardly resigned my place as a counsel for injured innocence.

He never raised his head as I entered, but continued his occupation without noticing me, muttering below his breath the words as they fell from his pen. "Take a seat," said he curtly, at last. Perceiving now that he was fully aware of my presence, I sat down without reply. "This bag is late, Mr. Paynter," said he, blandly, as he laid down his pen and looked me in the face.

"Your excellency will permit me, in limine, to observe that my name is not Paynter."

"Possibly, sir," said he haughtily; "but you are evidently before me for the first time, or you would know that, like my great colleague and friend, Prince Metternich, I have made it a rule through life never to burden my memory with whatever can be spared it, and of these are the patronymics of all subordinate people; for this reason, sir, and to this end, every cook in my establishment answers to the name of Honoré, my valet is always Pierre, my coachman Jacob, my groom is Charles, and all foreign messengers I call Paynter. The original of that appellation is, I fancy, superannuated or dead, but he lives in some twenty successors who carry canvas reticules as well as he."

"The method may be convenient, sir, but it is scarcely complimentary," said I, stiffly.

"Very convenient," said he, complacently. "All consuls I address as Mr. Sloper. You can't fail to

perceive how it saves time, and I rather think that in the end they like it themselves. When did you leave town?"

"I left on Saturday last. I arrived at Dover by the express train, and it was there that the incident befel me by which I have now the honour to stand before your excellency."

Instead of bestowing the slightest attention on this exordium of mine, he had resumed his pen and was writing away glibly as before. "Nothing new stirring, when you left?" said he, carelessly.

"Nothing, sir. But to resume my narrative of explanation —"

"Come to dinner, Paynter; we dine at six," said he, rising hastily; and, opening a glass door into a conservatory, walked away, leaving me in a mingled state of shame, anger, humiliation, and, I will state, of ludicrous embarrassment, which I have no words to express.

"Dinner! No," exclaimed I, "if the alternative were a hard crust and a glass of spring water! not if I were to fast till this time to-morrow! Dine with a man who will not condescend to acknowledge even my identity, who will not deign to call me by my name, but only consents to regard me as a pebble on the sea-shore, a blade of grass in a wide meadow! Dine with him, to be addressed as Mr. Paynter, and to see Pierre, and Jacob, and the rest of them looking on me as one of themselves! By what prescriptive right does this man dare to insult those who, for aught he can tell,

are more than his equals in ability? Does the accident — and what other can it be than accident — of his station confer this privilege? How would he look if one were to retort with his own impertinence? What, for instance, if I were to say, 'I always call small diplomatists Bluebottles; you'll not be offended if, just for memory's sake, I address you as Bluebottle — Mr. Bluebottle, of course?'"

I was in ecstasies at this thought. It seemed to vindicate all my insulted personality, all my outraged and injured identity. "Yes," said I, "I will dine with him; six o'clock shall see me punctual to the minute, and determined to avenge the whole insulted family of the Paynters. I defy him to assert that the provocation came not from *his* side. I dare him to show cause why I should be the butt of *his* humour, any more than he of *mine*. I will be prepared to make use of his own exact words in repelling my impertinence, and say, "Sir, you have exactly embodied *my* meaning; you have to the letter expressed what this morning I felt on being called Mr. Paynter; you have, besides this, had the opportunity of experiencing the sort of pain such an impertinence inflicts, and you are now in a position to guide you as to how far you will persist in it for the future.'"

I actually revelled in the thought of this reprisal, and longed for the moment to come in which, indolently thrown back in my chair, I should say, "Bluebottle, pass the Madeira," with some comment on the advantage all the Bluebottles have in getting their wine

duty free. Then, with what sarcastic irony I should condole with him over his wearisome, dull career, eternally writing home platitudes for blue-books, making Grotius into bad grammar, and vamping up old Puffendorf for popular reading. "Ain't you sick of it all, B.-B.?" I should say, familiarly; "is not the unreality of the whole thing offensive? Don't you feel that a despatch is a sort of formula in which Madrid might be inserted for Moscow, and what was said of Naples might be predicated of Norway?" I disputed a long time with myself at what precise period of the entertainment I should unmask my battery and open fire. Should it be in the drawing-room, before dinner? Should it be immediately after the soup, with the first glass of sherry? Ought I to wait till the dessert, and that time when a sort of easy intimacy had been established which might be supposed to prompt candour and frankness? Would it not be in better taste to defer it till the servants had left the room? To expose him to his household seemed scarcely fair.

These were all knotty points, and I resolved them long and carefully, as I came back to my hotel, through the same silent street.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Don't keep a place for me at the *table d'hôte* to-day, Kramm," said I, in an easy carelessness; "I dine with his excellency. I couldn't well get off the first day, but to-morrow I promise you to pronounce upon your good cheer."

I suppose I am not the first man who has derived consequence from the invitation it has cost him misery to accept. How many in this world of snobbery have felt that the one sole recompense for long nights of *ennui* was the fact that their names figured amongst the distinguished guests in the next day's *Post*?

"It is not a grand dinner to-day, is it?" asked Kramm.

"No, no, a merely family party; we are very old chums, and have much to talk over."

"You will then go in plain black, and with nothing but your 'decorations.'"

"I will wear none," said I, "none; not even a ribbon." And I turned away to hide the shame and mortification his suggestion had provoked.

Punctually at six o'clock I arrived at the legation; four powdered footmen were in the hall, and a decent-looking personage in black preceded me up the stairs, and opened the double doors into the drawing-room,

without, however, announcing me, or paying the slightest attention to my mention of "Mr. Pottinger."

Laying down his newspaper as I entered, his excellency came forward with his hand out, and though it was the least imaginable touch, and his bow was grandly ceremonious, his smile was courteous and his manner bland.

"Charmed to find you know the merit of punctuality," said he. "To the untravelled English, six means seven, or even later. You may serve dinner, Robins. Strange weather we are having," continued he, turning to me; "cold, raw, and uncongenial."

We talked "barometer" till, the door opening, the *maître d'hôtel* announced, "His excellency is served;" a rather unpolite mode, I thought, of ignoring his company, and which was even more strongly impressed by the fact that he walked in first, leaving me to follow.

At the table a third "cover" was just being speedily removed as we entered, a fact that smote at my heart like a blow. The dinner began, and went on with little said; a faint question from the minister as to what the dish contained and a whispered reply constituted most of the talk, and an occasional cold recommendation to me to try this or that *entrée*. It was admirable in all its details, the cookery exquisite, the wines delicious, but there was an oppression in the solemnity of it all that made me sigh repeatedly. Had the butler been serving a high mass, his motions at the sideboard could scarcely have been more reverential.

"If you don't object to the open air, we'll take our coffee on the terrace," said his excellency; and we soon found ourselves on a most charming elevation, surrounded on three sides with orange-trees, the fourth opening a magnificent view over a fine landscape with the Taunus mountains in the distance.

"I can offer you at least a good cigar," said the minister, as he selected with great care two from a number on a silver plateau before him. "These, I think, you will find recommendable; they are grown for myself at Cuba, and prepared after a receipt only known to one family."

In all this there was a dignified civility, not at all like the impertinent freedom of his manner in the morning. He never, besides, addressed me as Mr. Paynter; in fact, he did not advert to a name at all, not giving me the slightest pretext for that reprisal I had come so charged with; and, as to opening the campaign myself, I'd as soon have commenced acquaintance with a tiger by a pull at his tail. We were now alone; the servants had retired, and there we sat, silently smoking our cigars in apparent ease, but, one of us at least, in a frame of mind the very opposite to tranquillity. What a rush and conflict of thought was in my head! Why had not *she* dined with us? Was her position such as that the presence of a stranger became an embarrassment? Good heaven! was I to suppose this, that, and the other? What was there in this man that so imposed on me, that when I wanted to speak I only could sigh, and that I felt his presence

like some overpowering spell? It was that calm, self-contained, quiet manner — cold rather than austere, courteous without cordiality — that chilled me to the very marrow of my bones. Lecture *him* on the private moralities of his life! ask *him* to render me an account of his actions! address *him* as Bluebottle! —

“With such tobacco as that, one can drink Bordeaux,” said he. “Help yourself.”

And I did help myself — freely, repeatedly. I drank for courage, as a man might drink from thirst or fever, or for strength in a moment of fainting debility. The wine was exquisite, and my heart beat more forcibly, and I felt it.

I cannot follow very connectedly the course of events; I neither know how the conversation glided into politics, nor what I said on that subject. As to the steps by which I succeeded in obtaining his excellency's confidence, I know as little as a man does of the precise moment in which he is wet through in a Scotch mist. I have a dim memory of talking in a very dictatorial voice, and continually referring to my “entrance into public life,” with reference to what Peel “said,” and what the Duke “told me.”

“What's the use of writing home?” said his excellency, in a desponding voice. “For the last five years I have called attention to what is going on here: nobody minds, nobody heeds it. Open any blue-book you like, and will you find one solitary despatch from Hesse-Kalbbratenstadt?”

“I cannot call one to mind.”

"Of course you can't. Would you believe it, when the Zeringer party went out, and the Schlaffdorfers came in, I was rebuked — actually rebuked — for sending off a special messenger with the news? And then came out a despatch in cipher, which being interpreted contained this stupid doggrel:

Strange that such difference should be

'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.

I ask, sir, is it thus the affairs of a great country can be carried on? The efforts of Russia here are incessant: a certain personage — I will mention no names — loves caviar, he likes it fresh, there is a special *estaffette* established to bring it! I learned, by the most insidious researches, his fondness for English cheese; I lost no time in putting the fact before the cabinet I represented, that while timid men looked tremblingly towards France, the thoughtful politician saw the peril of Hesse-Kalbbratenstadt. I urged them to lose no time: "The grand-duchess has immense influence — countermine her," said I, "countermine her with a Stilton;" and, would you believe it, sir, they have not so much as sent out a Cheddar! What will the people of England say one of these days when they learn, as learn they shall, that at this mission here I am alone — that I have neither secretary nor *attaché*, paid or unpaid — that since the Crimean war the whole weight of the legation has been thrown upon me — nor is this all, but that a systematic course of treachery — I can't call it lies — has been adopted

to entrap me, if such were possible? My despatches are unreplied to, my questions all unanswered. I stand here with the peace of Europe in my hands, and none to counsel nor advise me. What will you say, sir, to the very last despatch I have received from Downing Street? It runs thus:

“I am instructed by his lordship to inform you, that he views with indifference your statement of the internal condition of the grand-duchy, but is much struck by your charge for sealing-wax.

“I have, sir, &c.”

“This is no longer to be endured. A public servant who has filled some of the most responsible of official stations — I was eleven years at Tragotà, in the Argentine Republic; I was a *chargé* at Oohululoo for eight months — the only European who ever survived an autumn there; they then sent me special to Cabanhos to negotiate the Salt-sprat treaty; after that —”

Here my senses grew muddy: the grey dim light, the soft influences of a good dinner and a sufficiency of wine, the drowsy tenor of the minister's voice, all conspired, and I slept as soundly as if in my bed. My next conscious moment was as his excellency moved his chair back, and said,

“I think a cup of tea would be pleasant; let us come into the drawing-room.”

CHAPTER XV.

ON entering the drawing-room, his excellency presented me to an elderly lady, very thin, and very wrinkled, who received me with a cold dignity, and then went on with her crochet-work. I could not catch her name, nor, indeed, was I thinking of it; my whole mind was bent upon the question, Who could she be? For what object was she there? All my terrible doubts of the morning now rushed forcibly back to my memory, and I felt that never had I detested a human being with the hate I experienced for her. The pretentious stiffness of her manner, the haughty self-possession she wore, were positive outrages; and, as I looked at her, I felt myself muttering, "Don't imagine that your heavy black moiré, or your rich falls of lace, impose upon *me*. Never fancy that this mock austerity deceives one who reads human nature as he reads large print. I know, and I abhor you, old woman! That a man should be to the other sex as a wolf to the fold, the sad experience of daily life too often teaches; but that a woman should be false to woman, that all the gentle instincts we love to think feminine, should be debased to treachery and degraded into snares for betrayal, this is an offence that cries aloud to Heaven!

"No more tea — none!" cried I, with an energy, that nearly made the footman let the tray fall, and so far startled the old lady, that she dropped her knitting, with a faint cry. As for his excellency, he had covered his face with the *Globe*, and I believe was fast asleep.

I looked about for my hat to take my leave, when a sudden thought struck me. "I will stay. I will sit down beside this old creature, and, for once at least in her miserable life, she shall hear from the lips of a man a language that is not that of the debauchee. Who knows what effect one honest word of a true-hearted man may not work? I will try, at all events," said I, and approached her. She did not, as I expected, make room for me on the sofa beside her, and I was therefore obliged to take a chair in front. This was so far awkward that it looked formal; it gave somewhat the character of accusation to my position, and I decided to obviate the difficulty by assuming a light, easy, cheerful manner at first, as though I suspected nothing.

"It's a pleasant little capital, this Kalbbratenstadt," said I, as I lay back in my chair.

"Is it?" said she, dryly, without looking up from her work.

"Well, I mean," said I, "it seems to have its reasonable share of resources. They have their theatre, and their music garden, and their promenades, and their drives to — to —"

"You'll find all the names set down there," said

she, handing me a copy of Murray's "Handbook" that lay beside her.

"I care less for names than facts, madam," said I, angrily, for her retort had stung me, and routed all my previous intention of a smooth approach to the fortress. "I am one of those unfashionable people who never think the better of vice because it wears French gloves, and goes perfumed with *Ess bouquet*."

She took off her spectacles, wiped them, looked at me, and went on with her work without speaking.

"If I appear abrupt, madam," said I, "in this opening, it is because the opportunity I now enjoy may never occur again, and may be of the briefest even now. We meet by what many would call an accident — one of those incidents which the thoughtless call chance directed my steps to this place; let me hope that that which seemed a hazard may bear all the fruits of maturest combination, and that the weak words of one frail, even as yourself, may not be heard by you in vain. Let me therefore ask you one question — only one — and give me an honest answer to it."

"You are a very singular person," said she, "and seem to have strangely forgotten the very simple circumstance that we meet for the first time now."

"I know it, I feel it; and that it may also be for the last and only time is my reason for this appeal to you. There are persons who, seeing you here, would treat you with a mock deference, address you with a counterfeit respect, and go their ways; who would say

to their selfish hearts, 'It is no concern of mine, why should it trouble me?' But I am not one of these. I carry a conscience in my breast; a conscience that holds its daily court, and will even to-morrow ask me, 'Have you been truthful, have you been faithful? When the occasion served to warn a fellow-creature of the shoal before him, did you cry out, "Take soundings! you are in shallow water?" or, "Did you with slippery phrases gloss over the peril, because it involved no danger to yourself?"'

"Would that same conscience be kind enough to suggest that your present conduct is an impertinence, sir?"

"So it might, madam; just as the pilot is impertinent when he cries out 'Hard, port! breakers ahead!'"

"I am therefore to infer, sir," said she, with a calm dignity, "that my approach to a secret danger — of which I can have no knowledge — is a sufficient excuse for the employment of language on your part that, under a less urgent plea, had been offensive?"

"You are," said I, boldly.

"Speak out, then, sir, and declare what it is."

"Nay, madam, if the warning find no echo within, my words are useless. I have said I would ask you a question."

"Well, sir, do so."

"Will you answer it frankly? Will you give it all the weight and influence it should bear, and reply to it with that truthful spirit that conceals nothing?"

"What is your question, sir? You had better be

speedy with it, for I don't much trust to my continued patience."

I arose at this, and, passing behind the back of my chair, leaned my arms on the upper rail, so as to confront her directly; and then, in the voice of an accusing angel, I said, "Old woman, do you know where you are going?"

"I protest, sir," said she, rising, with an indignation I shall not forget — "I protest, sir, you make me actually doubt if I know where I am!"

"Then let me tell you, madam," said I, with the voice of one determined to strike terror into her heart — "let me tell you; and may my words have the power to awaken you, even now, to the dreadful consequences of what you are about!"

"Shalley! Shalley!" cried she, in amazement, "is this gentleman deranged, or is it but the passing effect of your conviviality?" And with this she swept out of the room, leaving me there alone, for I now perceived — what seemed also to have escaped her — that the minister had slipped quietly away some time before, and was doubtless at that same moment in the profoundest of slumbers.

I took my departure at once. There were no leave-takings to delay me, and I left the house in a mood little according with the spirit of one who had partaken of its hospitalities, I am constrained to admit I was the very reverse of satisfied with myself. It was cowardly and mean of me to wreak my anger on that old woman, and not upon him who was the really great offender.

He it was I should have arraigned; and with the employment of a little artifice and some tact, how terrible I might have made even my jesting levity! how sarcastic my sneers at fashionable vice! Affecting utter ignorance about his life and habits, I could have incidentally thrown out little episodes of all the men who have wrecked their fortunes by abandoned habits. I would have pointed to this man who made a brilliant opening in the House, and that who had acquired such celebrity at the Bar; I would have shown the rising statesman tarnished, the future chief justice disqualified; I would have said, "Let no man, however modest his station or unfrequented his locality, imagine that the world takes no note of his conduct; in every class he is judged by his peers, and you and I, Doubleton, will as assuredly be arraigned before the bar of society as the pickpocket will be charged before the beak!"

I continued to revolve these and such-like thoughts throughout the entire night. The wine I had drunk fevered and excited me, and added to that disturbed state which my own self-accusings provoked. Doubts, too, flitted across my mind whether I ought not to have maintained a perfect silence towards the others, and reserved all my eloquence for the poor girl herself. I imagined myself taking her hand between both mine, while, with averted head, she sobbed as if her heart would break, and, saying, "Be comforted, poor stricken deer! be comforted; I know all. One who is far from perfect himself, sorrows with and compassionates you; he will be your friend, your adviser, your protector. I

will restore you to that home you quitted in innocence. I will bring you back to that honeysuckled porch where your pure heart expanded in home affections." Nothing shall equal the refined delicacy of my manner; that mingled reserve and kindness — a sort of cross between a half-brother and a canon of St. Paul's — shall win her over to repentance, and then to peace. How I fancied myself at intervals of time visiting that cottage, going, as the gardener watches some cherished plant, to gaze on the growing strength I had nurtured, and enjoy the luxury of seeing the once drooping flower expanding into fresh loveliness and perfume. "Yes, Potts, this would form one of those episodes you have so often longed to realise." And then I went on to fancy a long heroic struggle between my love and that sentiment of respect for worldly opinion which is dear to every man, the years of conflict wearing me down in health, but exalting me immensely in every moral consideration. Let the hour of crowning victory at last come, I should take her to my bosom, and say, "There is rest for thee here!"

"His excellency begs that you will call at the legation as early as you can this morning," said a waiter, entering with the breakfast tray; and I now perceived that I had never gone to bed, or closed my eyes during the night.

"How did this message come?" I asked.

"By the chasseur of his excellency."

"And how addressed?"

"To the gentleman who dined yesterday at the legation."

I asked these questions to ascertain how far he persisted in the impertinence of giving me a name that was not mine, and I was glad to find, that on this occasion no transgression had occurred.

I hesitated considerably about going to him. Was I to accept that slippery morality that says, "I see no more than I please in the man I dine with," or was I to go boldly on and denounce this offender to himself? What if he were to say, "Potts, let us play fair! put your own cards on the table, and let us see are you always on the square? Who is your father? how does he live? Why have you left home, and how? What of that horse you have —"

"No, no, not stolen — on my honour, not stolen!"

"Well, ain't it ugly? Isn't the story one that any relating might, without even a spice of malevolence, make marvellously disagreeable? Is the tale such as you'd wish to herald you into any society you desired to mix with?" It was in this high, easy, and truly companionable style that conscience kept me company while I ate two eggs and a plate of buttered toast.

"After all," thought I, "might it not prove a great mistake not to wait on him? How if, in our talk over politics last night, I may have dropped some remarkable expression, a keen appreciation of some statesman, an extraordinary prediction of some coming crisis? Maybe it is to question me more fully about my 'views' of the state of Europe." Now, I am rather given to

“views of the state of Europe.” I like that game of patience, formed by shuffling up all the governments of the Continent, and then seeing who is to have the most “tricks,” who’s to win all the kings, and who the knaves. “Yes,” thought I, “this is what he is at. These diplomatic people are consummately clever at pumping; their great skill consists in extracting information from others and adapting it to their own uses. Their social condition confers the great advantage of intercourse with whatever is remarkable for station, influence, and ability; and I think I hear his excellency muttering to himself, ‘Remarkable man that — large views — great reach of thought — wish I could see more of him; must try what polite attentions may accomplish.’ Well,” said I, with a half sigh, “it is the old story, *Sic vos non vobis*; and I suppose it is one of the curses on Irishmen that, from Edmund Burke to Potts, they should be doomed to cram others. I will go. What signifies it to *me*? I am none the poorer in dispensing my knowledge than is the nightingale in discoursing her sweet music to the night air, and flooding the groves with waves of melody: like *her*, I give of an affluence that never fails me.” And so I set out for the legation.

As I walked along through the garden, a trimly-dressed French maid passed me, turned, and repassed, with a look that had a certain significance. “It was monsieur dined here yesterday?” said she, interrogatively; and as I smiled assent, she handed me a very small-sealed note, and disappeared.

It bore no address, but the word Mr. —; a strange, not very ceremonious direction. "But, poor girl," thought I, "she knows me not as Potts, but as Protector. I am not the individual, but the representative of that wide-spread benevolence that succours the weak and consoles the afflicted. I wonder has she been touched by my devotion? has she imagined — oh, that she would! — that I have followed her hither, that I have sworn a vow to rescue and to save her? or is this note the cry of a sorrow-struck spirit, saying, 'Come to my aid ere I perish'?"

My fingers trembled as I broke the seal; I had to wipe a tear from my eye ere I could begin to read. My agitation was great, it was soon to be greater. The note contained very few words; they were these:

"SIR, — I have not communicated to my brother, Sir Shalley Doubtleton, any circumstance of your unaccountable conduct yesterday evening. I hope that my reserve will be appreciated by you, and

"I am, your faithful servant,

"MARTHA KEATS."

I did not faint, but I sat down on the grass, sick and faint, and I felt the great drops of cold perspiration burst out over my forehead and temples. "So," muttered I, "the venerable person I have been lecturing is his excellency's own sister! My exhortations to a changed life have been addressed to a lady doubtless as rigid in morals as austere in manners." Though

I could recal none of the words I employed, I remembered but too well the lesson I intended to convey, and I shuddered with disgust at my own conduct. Many a time have I heard severest censure on the preacher who has from the pulpit scattered words of doubtful application to the sinners beneath; but here was I making a direct and most odious attack upon the life and habits of a lady of immaculate behaviour! Oh, it was too — too bad! A whole year of sackcloth and ashes would not be penance for such iniquity. How could she have forgiven it? what consummate charity enabled her to pardon an offence so gross and so gratuitous? Or is it that she foresaw consequences so grave, in the event of disclosure, that she dreaded to provoke them. What might not an angry brother, in such a case, be warranted in doing? Would the world call any vengeance exorbitant? I studied her last phrase over and over, "I hope my reserve will be appreciated by you." This may mean, "I reserve the charge — I hold it over you as a bail bond for the future; diverge ever so little from the straight road, and I will say, 'Potts, stand forward and listen to your indictment.'" She may have some terrible task in view for me, some perilous achievement which I cannot now refuse. This old woman may be to me as was the Old Man of the Sea to Sindbad. I may be fated to carry her for ever on my back, and the dread of her be a living nightmare to me. "At such a price, existence has no value," said I, in despair. "Worse even than the bondage is the feeling that I am no

longer, to my own heart, the great creature I love to think myself. Instead of Potts the generous, the high-spirited, the confiding, the self-denying, I am Potts the timorous, the terror-stricken, and the slave."

Out of my long and painful musings on the subject, I bethought me of a course to take. I would go to her and say:

"Listen to this parable: I remember once, when a member of a phrenological club, a stupid jest was played off upon the society by some one presenting us with the cast of a well-known murderer's skull, and asking for our interpretations of its development. We gave them with every care and deliberation; we pointed out the fatal protuberances of crime, and indicated the depressions, which showed the absence of all prudential restraints; we demonstrated all the evidences of badness that were there, and proved that, with such a head, a man must have thought killing no murder. The rejoinder to our politeness was a small box that arrived by the mail, labelled, 'The original of the cast forwarded on the 14th.' We opened it, and found a pumpkin! The foolish jester fancied that he had cast an indelible stain upon phrenology, quite forgetting the fact that his pumpkin had personated a skull which, had it ever existed, would have presented the characteristics we gave it." I would say, "Now, madam, make the application, and say, do you not rather commend than condemn? are you not more ready to applaud than upbraid me?"

Second thoughts rather deterred me from this plan;

the figurative line is often dangerous with elderly people. It is just as likely she would mistake the whole force of my illustration, and bluntly say, "I'd beg to remark, sir, I am not a pumpkin!"

"No. I will not adventure on this path; there is no need that I should ever meet her again, or, if I should, we may meet as utter strangers." This resolve made, I arose boldly, and walked on towards the house.

His excellency, I learned, was at home, and had been for some time expecting me. I found him in his morning-room, in the same costume and same occupation as on the day before.

"There's the *Times*," said he, as I entered; "I shall be ready for you presently;" and worked away without lifting his head.

Affecting to read, I set myself to regard him with attention. Vast piles of papers lay around him on every side; the whole table, and even the floor at his feet, was littered with them. "Would," thought I — "would that these writers for the Radical press, these scurrilous penny-a-liners who inveigh against a bloated and pampered aristocracy, could just witness the daily life of labour of one of these spoiled children of fortune. Here is this man, doubtless reared in ease and affluence, and see him how he toils away, from sundown to dawn, unravelling the schemes, tracing the wiles, and exposing the snares of these crafty foreigners. Hark! he is muttering over the subtle sentence he has just written: 'I am much grieved about Maria's little girl,

but I hope she will escape being marked by the malady.'” A groan that broke from me here startled him, and he looked up:

“Ah! yes, by the way, I want you, Paynter.”

“I am not Paynter, your excellency, my name is —”

“Of course, you have your own name, for your own peculiar set; but don't interrupt. I have a special service for you, and will put it in the ‘extraordinaries.’ I have taken a little villa on the lake of Como for my sister, but from the pressure of political events I am not able to accompany her there. She is a very timid traveller, and cannot possibly go alone. You'll take charge of her, therefore, Paynter — there don't be fussy — you'll take charge of her, and a young lady who is with her, and you'll see them housed and established there. I suppose she will prefer to travel slowly, some thirty miles or so a day, post-horses always, and strictly avoiding railroads; but you can talk it over together yourselves. There was a Bobus to have come out —”

“A Bobus!”

“I mean a doctor — I call every doctor, Bobus — but something has detained him, or, indeed, I believe he was drowned; at all events, he's not come, and you'll have to learn how to measure out ether, and drop morphine; — the “companion” will help you. And keep an account of your expenses, Paynter — your own expenses for F.O. — and don't let her fall sick at any out-of-the-way place, which she has rather

a knack of doing; and, above all, don't telegraph on any account. Come and dine — six."

"If you will excuse me at dinner, I shall be obliged. I have a sort of half engagement."

"Come in about nine, then," said he, "for she'd like to talk over some matters. Look out for a carriage, too; I don't fancy giving mine if you can get another. One of those great roomy German things with a cabriolet front, for Miss — I forget her name — would prefer a place outside. Kramm, the landlord, can help you to search for one; and let it be dusted, and aired, and fumigated, and the drag examined, and the axles greased — in a word, have your brains about you, Paynter. Good-by." Exit as before.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE is no denying it, I have led a life of far more than ordinary happiness. The white squares in the chequer of my existence have certainly equalled the black ones, and it is not every man can say as much. I suspect I owe a great share of this enjoyment to temperament, to a disposition not so much remarkable for opposing difficulties, as for deriving all the possible pleasure from any fortunate conjuncture. This gift I know I possess. I am not one of those strong natures which, by their intrinsic force, are ever impressing their own image on the society they live in. I am a weak, frail, yielding creature, but my very pliancy has given me many a partnership in emotions which, with a more rugged temperament, I had not partaken of. When one has wept over a friend's misfortunes and awakes to the consciousness that no ill has befallen himself, he feels as some great millionaire might feel who has bestowed a thousand pounds in charity and yet knows he is never the poorer. With the proud consciousness of this fresh title to men's admiration, he has the secret satisfaction of knowing that he will go clothed in purple as before, and fare to-day as sumptuously as yesterday. Do you, most generous of readers, call

this selfishness? It is the very reverse. It is the grand culminating point of human sympathy.

I have a great deal more to say about myself. It is a theme I am really fond of, but I am not exactly sure that you are like-minded, or that this is the fittest place for it. I return to events.

It was on a bright, breezy morning of the early autumn that a heavy old German travelling carriage — a waggon! — rattled over the uneven pavement of Kalbbratenstadt, and soon gaining one of the long forest alleys, rolled noiselessly over the smooth sward. Within sat an elderly lady with a due allowance of air cushions, toy terriers, and guide-books; in the rumble were a man and a maid; and in the cabriolet in front were a pale but placid girl, with large grey eyes and long lashes, and he who now writes these lines beside her. They who had only known me a few months back as a freshman of Trinity would not have recognised me now, as I sat with a long-peaked travelling-cap, a courier's belt and bag at my side, and the opening promise of a small furry moustache on my upper lip; not to say that I had got up a sort of supercilious air of contemptuous pity for the foreigner, which I had observed to be much in favour with the English abroad. It cost me dear to do this, and nothing but the consciousness that it was one of the requirements of my station could have made me assume it, for in my heart of hearts, I revelled in enjoyment of all around me. I liked the soft, breezy, balmy air, the mellow beech wood, the grassy turf overgrown with

violets, the wild notes of the frightened wood-pigeon, the very tramp-tramp of the massive horses, with their scarlet tassels and their jingling bells, all pleased and interested me. Not to speak of her who, at my side, felt a very child's delight at every novelty of the way.

"What would I have said to any one who, only a fortnight ago, had promised me such happiness as this?" said I to my companion, as we drove along, while the light branches rustled pleasantly over the roof of the carriage, darkening the shade around us, or occasionally deluging us with the leaves as we passed.

"And are you then so very happy?" asked she, with a pleasant smile.

"Can you doubt it? or rather, is it that, as the emotion does not extend to yourself, you *do* doubt it?"

"Oh, as for me," cried she joyfully, "it is very different. I have never travelled till now — seen nothing, actually nothing. The veriest common-places of the road, the peasants' costumes, their wayside cottages, the little shrines they kneel at, are all objects of picturesque interest to me, and I am ready to exclaim at each moment, 'Oh! why cannot we stop here? shall we ever see anything so beautiful again as this?'"

"And hearing you talk thus, you can ask me am I so very happy!" said I, reproachfully.

"What I meant was, is it not stupid to have no companion of your own turn of mind, none with whom

you could talk, without condescending to a tone beneath you, just as certain stories are reduced to words of one syllable for little children?"

"Mademoiselle is given to sarcasm, I see," said I, half peevishly.

"Nothing of the kind," said she, blushing slightly. "It was in perfect good faith. I wished you a more suitable companion. Indeed after what I had heard from his excellency about you, I was terrified at the thought of my own insufficiency."

"And pray what *did* he say of me?" asked I, in a flutter of delight.

"Are you very fond of flattery?"

"Immensely!"

"Is it not possible that praise of you could be so exaggerated as to make you feel ashamed?"

"I should say, perfectly impossible; that is, to a mind regulated as mine, over-elation could never happen. Tell me, therefore, what he said?"

"I can't remember one-half of it; he remarked how few men in the career — I conclude he meant diplomacy — could compare with you; that you had such just views about the state of Europe, such an accurate appreciation of public men. I can't say how many opportunities you mustn't have had, and what valuable uses you have not put them to. In a word, I felt that I was about to travel with a great statesman and a consummate man of the world, and was terrified accordingly."

"And now that the delusion is dispelled, how do you feel?"

"But is it dispelled? Am I not shocked with my own temerity in daring to talk thus lightly with one so learned?"

"If so," said I, "you conceal your embarrassment wonderfully."

And then we both laughed, but I am not quite sure it was at the same joke.

"Do you know where you are going?" said I, taking out a travelling map as a means of diverting our conversation into some higher channel.

"Not in the least."

"Nor care?"

"Nor care."

"Well, I must say, it is a most independent frame of mind. Perhaps you could extend this fine philosophy, and add, 'Nor with whom!'"

I was not at all conscious of what an impertinence I had uttered till it was out; nor, indeed, even then, till I remarked that her cheek had become scarlet, and her eyes double as dark as their wont.

"Yes," said she, "there is one condition for which I should certainly stipulate — not to travel with any one who could needlessly offend me."

I could have cried with shame; I could have held my hand in the flame of a fire to expiate my rude speech. And so I told her; while I assured her at the same time, with marvellous consistency, that it was not rude at all; that it was entirely misconception on her

part; that *nous autres diplomates* — Heaven forgive me the lying assumption! — had a way of saying little smartnesses that don't mean much; that we often made our coin ring on the table, though it turned out bad money when it came to be looked at; that Talleyrand did it, and Walewsky did it, and I did it — we all did it!

Now, there was one most unlucky feature in all this. It was only a few minutes before this passage occurred, that I said to myself, "Potts, here is one whose frank, fresh, generous nature claims all your respect and devotion. No nonsense of your being this, that, and t'other here. Be truthful and be honest; neither pretend to be man of fortune nor man of fashion; own fairly to her by what chance you adventured upon this strange life; tell her, in a word, you are the son of Potts — Potts the 'pothecary — and neither a hero nor a plenipotentiary!"

I have no doubt, most amiable of readers, that nothing can seem possibly more easy than to have done all this. You deem it the natural and ordinary course; just as, for instance, a merchant in good credit and repute would feel no repugnance to calling all his creditors together to inspect his books, and see that, though apparently solvent, he was, in truth, utterly bankrupt. And yet there is some difficulty in doing this. Does not the law of England expressly declare that no man need criminate himself? Who accuses you, then, Potts? What is the charge against you? And then I bethought me of the worthy old alderman,

who, on learning that "Robinson Crusoe" was a fiction, exclaimed, "It may be so; but I have lost the greatest pleasure of my life in hearing it." What a profound philosophy was there in that simple avowal! With what illusions are we not cheered on through life; how unreal the joys that delight and the triumphs that elate us! for we are all hypochondriacs, and are as often cured with bread pills as with bold remedies. "Yes," thought I, "this young girl is happy in the thought that her companion is a person of rank, station, and influence; she feels a sort of self-elation in being associated with one endowed with all worldly advantages. Shall I rob her of this illusion? Shall I rudely deprive her of what imparts a charm to her existence, and gives a sort of romantic interest to her daily life? Harsh and needless would be the cruelty!"

While I thus argued with myself, she had opened her guide-book, and was eagerly reading away about the road we were travelling. "We are to halt at Bömerstein, are we not?" asked she.

"Yes," said I, "we rest there for the night. It is one of those little villages of which a German writer has given us a striking picture."

"Auerstadt," broke she in.

"So you have read him? You read German?"

"Yes, tolerably; that is, well enough for Schiller and Uhland, but not well enough for Jean Paul and Goethe."

"Never mind; trust me for a guide, you shall now venture upon both."

"But how will you be able to give up time valuable as yours to such teachings? Would it be fair of me, besides, to steal hours that ought to be devoted to your country?"

Though I had not the slightest imaginable ground to suspect any secret sarcasm in this speech, my guilty conscience made me feel it as a perfect torture. "She knows me," thought I, "and this sneer at my pretended importance is intended to overwhelm me."

"As to my country's claims," said I, haughtily, "I make light of them. All that I have seen of life only shows the shallowness of what is called the public service. I am resolved to leave it, and for ever."

"And for what?"

"A life of retirement — obscurity if you will."

"It is what I should do if I were a man."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have often reflected over the delight I have felt in walking through some man's demesne, revelling in the enjoyment of its leafy solitude, its dreary shade, its sunlit vistas, and I have thought, 'If all these things, not one of which are mine, can bring such pleasure to my heart, why should I not adopt the same philosophy in life, and be satisfied with enjoying without possessing? A very humble lot would suffice for one, nothing but great success could achieve the other.'"

"What becomes, then, of that great stimulus to good they call labour?"

"Oh, I should labour, too. I'd work at whatever I

was equal to. I'd sew, and knit, and till my garden, and be as useful as possible."

"And I would write," said I, enthusiastically, as though I were plotting out my share in this garden of Eden. "I would write all sorts of things: reviews, and histories, and stories, and short poems, and, last of all, the 'Confessions of Algernon Sydney Potts.'"

"Oh, what a shocking title! How could such names have met together? That shocking epithet Potts would vulgarise it all."

"I really cannot agree with you," said I, angrily.

"Without," said she, "you meant it for a sort of quiz; and that Potts was to be a creature of absurdity and folly, a pretender and a snob."

I felt as if I was choking with passion; but I tried to laugh, and say, "Yes, of course."

"That would be good fun enough," went she on. "I'd like, if I could, to contribute to that. You should invent the situations, and leave me occasionally to supply the reflective part."

"It would be charming, quite delightful."

"Shall we do it, then? Let us try it, by all means. We might begin by imagining Potts in search of this, that, or t'other — love, happiness, solitude, climate, scenery, anything, in short. Let us fancy him on a journey, try and personate him, that would be the real way. Do you, for instance, be Potts, and I'll be his sister Susan. It will be the best fun in the world, as we go along, to see everything, note everything, and discuss everything Pottswise."

"It would be too ridiculous, too absurd," said I, sick with anger.

"Not a bit; we are travelling with our old grandmother, we are making the tour of Europe, and keeping our journal. Every evening we compare notes of what we have seen. Pray do so; I'm quite wild to try it."

"Really," said I, gravely, "it is a sort of trifling I should find it very difficult to descend to. I see no reason, besides, to associate the name of Potts with what you are pleased to call snobbery!"

"Could you help it? Could you, with all the best will in the world, make Potts a man of distinction? Wouldn't he, in spite of you, be low, vulgar, inquisitive, and obtrusive? Wouldn't you find him thrusting himself forward, twenty times a day, into positions he had no right to? Wouldn't the creature be a butt and a dupe —"

"Shall I own," burst I in, "that it gives me no exalted idea of your taste, if I find that you select for ridicule a person on the mere showing that his name is a monosyllable? And, once for all, I repudiate all share in the scheme, and beg that I may not hear more of it."

I turned away as I said this. She resumed her book, and we spoke no more to each other till we reached our halting-place for the night.

CHAPTER XVII.

I AM forced to the confession, Mrs. Keats was not what is popularly called an agreeable old lady. She spoke seldom, she smiled never, and she had a way of looking at you, a sort of cold astonishment, seeming to say, "How is this? explain yourself," that kept me in a perpetual terror.

My morning's tiff with Miss Herbert had neither been condoned nor expiated when we sat down to dinner, as stiff a party of three as can well be imagined: scarcely a word was interchanged as we ate.

"If you drink wine, sir, pray order it," said Mrs. Keats to me, in a voice that might have suited an invitation to prussic acid.

"This little wine of the country is very pleasant, madam," said I, courteously, "and I can even venture to recommend it."

"Not to me, sir. I drink water."

"Perhaps Miss Herbert will allow me?"

"Excuse me, I also drink water."

After a very dreary and painful pause, I dared to express a faint hope that Mrs. Keats had not been fatigued by the day's journey.

She looked at me for a second or two before replying, and then said: "I am really not aware, sir, that

I have manifested any such signs of weariness as would warrant your inquiry. If I should have, however ——”

“Oh, I beg you will pardon me, madam,” broke I in, apologetically; “my question was not meant for more than a mere ordinary politeness, a matter-of-course expression of my solicitude.”

“It will save us both some trouble in future, sir, if I remark that I am no friend to matter-of-course civilities, and never reply to them.”

I felt as though my head and face had been passed across the open door of a blast furnace. I was in a perfect flame, and dared not raise my eye from my plate.

“The waiter is asking if you will take coffee, sir,” said the inexorable old lady to me, as I sat almost stunned and stupid.

“Yes — with brandy — a full glass of brandy in it,” cried I, in the half-despair of one who knew not how to rally himself.

“I think we may retire, Miss H.,” said Mrs. Keats, rising with a severe dignity that seemed to say, “We are not bound to assist at an orgie.” And with a stern stare and a defiant little bow she moved towards the door. I was so awe-struck, that I never moved from my place, but stood resting my hand on my chair, till she said, “Do you mean to open the door, sir, or am I to do it for myself?”

I sprang forward at once, and flung it wide, my face all scarlet with shame.

She passed out, and Miss Herbert followed her. Her dress, however, catching in the doorway, she turned back to extricate it; I seized the moment to stoop down and say, "Do let me see you for one moment this evening — only one moment."

She shook her head in silent negative, and went away.

I sat down at the table, and filled myself a large goblet of wine: I drank it off, and replenished it. It was only this morning, a few brief hours ago, and I would not have changed fortunes with the Emperor of France. Life seemed to open before me like some beautiful alley in a garden, with a glorious vista in the distance. I would not have bartered the place in that cabriolet for the proudest throne in Europe. *She* was there beside me, listening in rapt attention, as I discoursed voyages, travels, memoirs, poetry, and personal adventures. With every changeful expression of lovely sympathy did she follow me through all. I was a hero to us both, myself as much captivated as she was; and now the brief drama was over, the lights were put out, and the theatre closed! How had I destroyed this golden delusion — why had I quarrelled with her, and for what? For a certain Potts, a creature who, in reality, had no existence! "For who is Potts?" said I. "Potts is no more a substance than Caleb Williams or Peregrine Pickle; Potts is the lay figure, that the artist dresses in any costume he requires — a Ranchero to-day, a Railway Director to-morrow. What an absurdity in the importance we

lend to mere names! Here, for instance, I take the label off the port, and I hang it round the neck of the claret decanter: have I changed the quality of the vintage? have I brought Bordeaux to the meridian of Oporto? Not a bit of it. And yet a man is to be more the victim of an accident than a bottle of wine, and his intrinsic qualities — strength, flavour, and richness — are not to be tested, but simply implied from the label round his neck! How narrow-minded, after all, of her, who ought to have known better! It is thus, however, we educate our women; this is part and parcel of the false system by which we fancy we make them companionable. The North American Indians are far in advance of us in all this: they assign them their proper places and fitting duties; they feel that, in this life of ours, order and happiness depend on the due distribution of burdens, and the Snapping Alligator never feels his squaw more truly his helpmate than when she is skinning eels for his dinner."

How I hated that old woman! I don't think I ever detested a human creature so much as that. I have often speculated as to whether venomous reptiles have any gratification imparted to them when they inflict a poisonous wound. Is the mosquito the happier of having stung one's nose? And, in the same spirit, I should like to know, do the disagreeable people of this world sleep the better from the consciousness of having offended us? Is there that great ennobling sense of a mission fulfilled for every cheek they set on fire and every heart they depress? and do they quench hope

and extinguish ambition with the same zeal that the Sun or the Phoenix put out a fire?

““If you drink wine, sir, pray order it,”” said I, mimicking her imperious tone. “Yes, madam, I do drink wine, and I mean to order it, and liberally. I travel at the expense of that noble old paymaster who only wags his tail the more the more he has to pay — the British Lion. I go down in the extraordinaries. I’m on what is called a special service. ‘Keep an account of your expenses, Paynter!’ Confound his insolence, he would say ‘Paynter.’ By the way, I have never looked how he calls me in my passport. I’m curious to see if I be Paynter there.” I had left the bag containing this and my money in my room, and I rang the bell, and told the waiter to fetch it.

The passport set forth in due terms all the dignities, honours, and decorations of the great man who granted it, and who bespoke for the little man who travelled by it all aid and assistance possible, and to let him pass freely, &c. “Mr. Ponto — British subject.” “Ponto!” What an outrage! This comes of a man making his *maître d’hôtel* his secretary. That stupid French flunkey has converted me into a water-dog. This may explain a good deal of the old lady’s rudeness; how could she be expected to be even ordinarily civil to a man called Ponto? She’d say at once, ‘His father was an Italian, and of course a courier, or a valet; or he was a foundling, and called after a favourite spaniel.’ I’ll rectify this without loss of time. If she has not the tact to discover the man

of education and breeding by the qualities he displays in intercourse, she shall be brought to admit them by the demands of his self-respect."

I opened my writing-desk and wrote just two lines — a polite request for a few moments of interview, signed "A. S. Pottinger." I wrote the name in a fine text hand, as though to say, "No more blunders, madam, this is large as print."

"Take this to your mistress, François," said I to the courier.

"Gone to bed, sir."

"Gone to bed! why, it's only eight o'clock."

A shrug and a smile were all he replied.

"And Miss Herbert — can I speak to *her*?"

"Fear not, sir; she went to her room, and told Clementina not to disturb her."

"It is of consequence, however, that I should see her. I want to speak of our arrangements for to-morrow — the hour we are to start —"

"Oh! but we are to stop here over to-morrow — I thought monsieur knew that," said the fellow, with the insolent grin of a menial at knowing more than his betters.

"Oh, to be sure we are," said I, laughingly, and affecting to have suddenly remembered it. "I forgot all about it, François; you are quite right. Take a glass of wine, François — or take the bottle with you, that's better." And I handed him a flask of Hochheimer of eight florins, right glad to get rid of his

presence and escape further scrutiny from his prying glances.

How relieved I felt when the fellow closed the door after him and left me to "blow off the steam" of my indignation all alone! And was I not indignant? Only to fancy this insolent old woman giving her orders without so much as condescending to communicate with me! I am left to learn her whim by a mere accident, or not learn it at all, and exhibit myself ready to depart at the inn door, and then hear, for the first time, that I may unpack again.

This was unquestionably a studied rudeness, and demanded an equally studied reprisal. She means to discredit my station and disparage my influence; how shall I reply to her? A vast variety of expedients offered themselves to my mind: I could go off, leaving a fearful letter behind me — a document that would cut her to the very soul with the sarcastic bitterness of its tone; but could I leave without a reconciliation with Miss Herbert — without the fond hope of our meeting as friends. I meant a great deal more, though I wouldn't trust myself to say so. Besides, were I to go away, there were financial considerations to be entertained. I could not, of course, carry off that crimson bag with its gold and silver contents, and yet it was very hard to tear myself from such a treasure.

I say it under correction, for I have never been rich, and, consequently, never in the position to assert it positively, but I declare my firm conviction to be

that no man has ever tasted the unbounded pleasure of a careless liberality on a journey who has not travelled at some other person's expense. Be as wealthy as you like, let your portmanteau be stuffed full of circular notes, and there will still be present at moments of payment the thought, "If I do not suffer myself to be cheated here, I shall have so much the more to squander, there." But, drawing from the bag of another, no such mean reflection obtrudes. You might as well defraud your lungs of a long inspiration out of the fear of taking more than your share of the atmosphere. There is enough, and will be enough there when you are dust and ashes.

In fact, if I had on one side the "three courses" of the great statesman, I had on the other full thirty reasons against each, and, therefore, I resolved to suspend action and do nothing. And let me here passingly remark that, much as we hear every day about the merits of promptitude and quick-wittedness, in nine cases out of ten in life, I'd rather "give the move than take it." The waiting policy is a rare one; it is the secret of success in love, and of victory in an equity court. And so I determined I'd wait and see what should come of it. I appealed to myself thus: "Potts, you are eminently a man of the world, one who accepts life as it is, with all its crosses and unto-ward incidents; who knows well that he must play bad cards even oftener than good ones. No impatience, therefore, no rashness; give at least twenty-four hours' thought to any important decision, and let a night's

sleep intervene between your first conception of a plan and its adoption." Oh, if the people who are fretting themselves about what is to happen this day ten years, would only remember what a long time it is — that is, counting by the number of events that will occur between this and to-morrow — not to say what incidents are happening at the antipodes that will yet bring joy or sorrow to their hearts — they would keep more of their sympathies for present use, and perhaps be the happier for the doing so.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I AM about to make a very original observation. I hope its truth may equal its originality. It is, that the man who has never had a sister, is, at his first entrance into life, far more the slave of feminine captivations, than he who has been brought up in a "house full of girls." "Oh, for shame, Mr. Potts! In this the gallantry we have heard so much of? Is this the spirit of that chivalrous devotion you have been incessantly impressing upon us?" Wait a moment, fair creature; give me one half-minute for an explanation. He who has not had sisters, has had no experiences of the behind-scene life of the female world; he has never heard one syllable about the plans, and schemes, and devices by which hearts are snared. He fancies Mary stuck that moss-rose in her hair in a moment of childish caprice; that Kate ran after her little sister and showed the prettiest of ankles in doing it, out of the irrepressible gaiety of her buoyant spirits. In a word, he is one who only sees the play when the house is fully lighted, and all the actors in their grand costume; he has never witnessed a rehearsal, and has not the very vaguest suspicion of a prompter.

To him, therefore, who has only experienced the rough companionship of brothers — or worse still, has

lived entirely alone — the first acquaintanceship with the young-lady world is such a fascination as no words can describe. The gentle look, the graceful gestures, the silvery voices, all the play and action of natures so infinitely more refined than any he has ever witnessed, are inexpressibly captivating. It is not alone the occupations of their hours, light, graceful, and picturesque as they are, but all their topics, their thoughts, seem to soar out of the common-place world he has lived in, and rise to ideal realms of poetry and beauty. I say it advisedly: I do not know of anything so truly Elysian in life as our first — our very first — experiences of this kind.

Werther's passion for Charlotte received a powerful impulse from watching her as she cut bread-and-butter for the children. There are vulgar natures who will smile at this; who cannot enter into the intense far-sightedness of that poetic conception; that could in one trait of simplicity embody a whole lifetime with its ennobling duties, its cheerful sacrifices, its gracefully-borne cares. Let him, therefore, who could sneer at Werther, scoff at Potts, as he owns that he never felt his heart so powerfully drawn to Kate Herbert as when he watched her making tea for breakfast. Dressed in a muslin that represented mourning, her rich hair plainly enclosed in a net, with a noiseless motion, she glided about, an ideal of gentle sadness, more fascinating than I can tell. If she bore any unpleasant memory of our little difference, she did not show it; her manner was calm and even kind. She felt, per-

haps, that some compensation was due to me for the rudeness of that old woman, and was not unwilling to make it.

"You know we are to rest here to-day?" said she, as she busied herself at the table.

"I heard it by a mere chance, and from the courier," said I, peevishly. "I am not quite certain in what capacity Mrs. Keats condescends to regard me, that I am treated with such scant courtesy. Probably you would be kind enough to ascertain this point for me?"

"I shall assuredly not ask," said she, with a smile.

"I certainly promised her brother — I could not do less for a colleague, not to say something more — that I'd see this old lady safe over the Alps. They are looking out for me anxiously enough at Constantinople all this while; in fact, I suspect there will be a nice confusion there through my delay, and I'd not be a bit surprised if they begin to believe that stupid story in the *Nord*. I suppose you saw it?"

"No. What is it about?"

"It is about your humble servant, Miss Herbert, and hints that he has received one hundred purses from the sheiks of the Lebanon not to reach the Golden Horn before they have made their peace with the Grand Vizier."

"And is of course untrue?"

"Of course, every word of it is a falsehood; but there are 'gobemouches' will believe anything. Mark

my words, and see if this allegation be not heard in the House of Commons, and some Tower Hamlets member start up to ask if the Foreign Secretary will lay on the table copies of the instructions given to a certain person, and supposed to be credentials of a nature to supersede the functions of our ambassador at the Porte. In confidence, between ourselves, Miss Herbert, so they are! I am entrusted with full powers about the Hatti Homayoun, as the world shall see in good time."

"Do you take your tea strong?" asked she; and there was something so odd and so inopportune in the question that I felt it as a sort of covert sneer; but when I looked up and beheld that pale and gentle face turned towards me, I banished the base suspicion, and forgetting all my enthusiasm, said,

"Yes, dearest; strong as brandy!"

She tried to look grave, perhaps angry; but in spite of herself, she burst out a laughing.

"I perceive, sir," said she, "that Mrs. Keats was quite correct when she said that you appear to have moments in which you are unaware of what you say."

Before I could rally to reply, she had poured out a cup of tea for Mrs. Keats, and left the room to carry it to her.

"'Moments in which I am unaware of what I say' — 'incoherent intervals' Forbes Winslow would call them: in plain English, I am mad. Old woman, have you dared to cast such an aspersion on me, and to

disparage me, too, in the quarter where I am striving to achieve success? For her opinion of me I am less than indifferent; for her judgment of my capacity, my morals, my manners, I am as careless as I well can be of anything; but these become serious disparagements when they reach the ears of one whose heart I would make my own. I will insist on an explanation — no, but an apology — for this. She shall declare that she used these words in some nonnatural sense — that I am the sanest of mortals: she shall give it under her hand and seal: ‘I, the undersigned, having in a moment of rash and impatient judgment, imputed to the bearer of this document, Algernon Sydney Potts’ — No, ‘Pottinger —’ ha, there is a difficulty! If I be Pottinger, I can never re-become Potts; if Potts, I am lost — or rather, Miss Herbert is lost to me for ever. What a dire embarrassment! Not to mention that in the passport I was Ponto!”

“Mrs. Keats desired me to beg you will step up to her room after breakfast, and bring your account-books with you.” This was said by Miss Herbert as she entered and took her place at the table.

“What has the old lady got in her head?” said I, angrily. “I have no account-books — I never had such in my life. When I travel alone, I say to my courier, ‘Diomedes’ — he is a Greek — ‘Diomedes, pay;’ and he pays. When Diomedes is not with me, I ask, ‘How much?’ and I give it.”

“It certainly simplifies travel,” said she, gravely.

“It does more, Miss Herbert: it accomplishes the

end of travel. Your doctor says, 'Go abroad — take a holiday — turn your back on Downing Street, and bid farewell to cabinet councils.' Where is the benefit of such a course, I ask, if you are to pass the vacation cursing custom-house officers, bullying landlords, and browbeating waiters? I say always, 'Give me a bad dinner if you must, but do not derange my digestion; rather a damp bed than thorns in the pillow.'"

"I am to say that you will see her, however," said she, with that matter-of-fact adhesiveness to the question that never would permit her to join in my digressions.

"Then I go under protest, Miss Herbert — under protest, and, as the lawyers say, without prejudice — that is, I go as a private gentleman, irresponsible and independent. Tell her this, and say, I know nothing of figures: arithmetic may suit the Board of Trade; in the Foreign Department we ignore it. You may add, too, if you like, that from what you have seen of me, I am of a haughty disposition, easily offended, and very vindictive — very!"

"But I really don't think this," said she, with a bewitching smile.

"Not to *you*, de——" I was nearly in it again: "not to *you*," said I, stammering and blushing till I felt on fire. I suspect that she saw all the peril of the moment, for she left the room hurriedly, on the pretext of asking Mrs. Keats to take more tea.

"She is sensible of your devotion, Potts; but is she touched by it? Has she said to herself, 'That

man is my fate, my destiny — it is no use resisting him; dark and mysterious as he is, I am drawn towards him by an inscrutable sympathy' — or is she still struggling in the toils, muttering to her heart to be still, and to wait? Flutter away, gentle creature," said I, compassionately, "but ruffle not your lovely plumage too roughly; the bars of your cage are not the less impassable that they are invisible. You *shall* love me, and you *shall* be mine!"

To these rapturous fancies there now succeeded the far less captivating thought of Mrs. Keats, and an approaching interview. Can any reader explain why it is, that one sits in quiet admiration of some old woman by Teniers or Holbein, and never experiences any chagrin or impatience at trials which, if only represented in life, would be positively odious? Why is it that art transcends nature and that ugliness in canvas is more endurable than ugliness in the flesh? Now, for my own part, I'd rather have faced a whole gallery of the Dutch school, from Van Eyck to Verhagen, than have confronted that one old lady who sat awaiting me in No. 12.

Twice as I sat at my breakfast did François put in his head, look at me, and retire without a word. "What is the matter? What do you mean?" cried I, impatiently, at the third intrusion.

"It is madam that wishes to know when monsieur will be at leisure to go up-stairs to her."

I almost bounded on my chair with passion. How was I, I would ask, to maintain any portion of that

dignity with which I ought to surround myself if exposed to such demands as this? This absurd old woman would tear off every illusion in which I draped myself. What availed all the romance a rich fancy could conjure up, when that wicked old enchantress called me to her presence, and in a voice of thunder said, "Strip off these masqueradings, Potts, I know the whole story." "Ay, but," thought I, "she cannot do so; of me and my antecedents she knows positively nothing." "Halt there!" interposes Conscience; "it is quite enough to pronounce the coin base without being able to say at what mint it was fabricated. She knows you, Potts, she knows you."

There is one great evil in castle-building, and I have thought very long and anxiously, and I must own fruitlessly over, how to meet it: it is that one never can get a lease of the ground to build on. One is always, like an Irish cottier, a tenant at will, likely to be turned out at a moment's notice, and dispossessed without pity or compassion. The same language applies to each: "You know well, my good fellow, you had no right to be there; pack up and be off!" It's no use saying that it was a bit of waste land unfenced and untilled; that, until you took it in hand, it was overgrown with nettles and duckweed; that you dispossessed no one, and such like. The answer is still the same, "Where's your title? Where's your lease?"

Now, I am curious to hear what injury I was inflicting on that old woman at No. 12 by any self-

deceptions of mine? Could the most exaggerated estimate I might form of myself, my present, or my future, in any degree affect *her*? Who constituted her a sort of ambulatory conscience, to call people's hearts to account at a moment's notice? It may be seen by the tone of these reflections, that I was fully impressed with the belief through some channel, or by some clue, Mrs. Keats knew all my history, and intended to use her knowledge tyrannically over me.

Oh, that I could only retaliate! Oh, that I had only the veriest fragment of her past life, out of which to construct her whole story. Just as out of a mastodon's molar, Cuvier used to build up the whole monster, never omitting a rib, nor forgetting a vertebra! How I should like to say to her, and with a most significant sigh, "I knew poor Keats well!" Could I not make even these simple words convey a world of accusation, blended with sorrow and regret?

François again, and on the same errand. "Say, I am coming; that I have only finished a hasty breakfast, and that I am coming this instant," cried I. Nor was it very easy for me to repress the more impatient expressions which struggled for utterance, particularly as I saw, or fancied I saw, the fellow pass his hand over his mouth to hide a grin at my expense.

"Is Miss Herbert up-stairs?"

"No, sir, she is in the garden."

This was so far pleasant. I dreaded the thought

of her presence at this interview, and I felt that punishment within the precincts of the gaol was less terrible than on the drop before the populace; and with this consoling reflection I mounted the stairs.

CHAPTER XIX.

I KNOCKED twice before I heard the permission to enter; but scarcely had I closed the door behind me, than the old lady advanced, and curtseying to me with a manner of most reverential politeness, said, "When you learn, sir, that my conduct has been dictated in the interest of your safety, you will, I am sure, graciously pardon many apparent rudenesses in my manner towards you, and only see in them my zeal to serve you."

I could only bow to a speech, not one syllable of which was in the least intelligible to me. She conducted me courteously to a seat, and only took her own after I was seated.

"I feel, sir," said she, "that there will be no end to our embarrassments if I do not go straight to my object and say at once that I know you. I tell you frankly, sir, that my brother did not betray your secret. The instincts of his calling — to *him* second nature — were stronger than fraternal love, and all he said to me was 'Martha, I have found a gentleman who is going south, and who, without inconvenience, can see you safely as far as Como.' I implicitly accepted his words, and agreed to set out immediately. I suspected

nothing — I knew nothing. It was only before going down to dinner that the paragraph in the *Courrier du Dimanche* met my eye, and as I read it, I thought I should have fainted. My first determination was not to appear at dinner. I felt that something or other in my manner would betray my knowledge of your secret. My next was to go down and behave with more than usual sharpness. You may have remarked that I was very abrupt, almost, shall I say, rude?"

I tried to enter a dissent to this, but did not succeed so happily as I meant; but she resumed:

"At any cost, however, sir, I determined that I alone should be the depositary of your confidence. Miss Herbert is to me a comparative stranger; she is, besides, very young; she would be in no wise a suitable person to entrust with such a secret, and so I said, I will pretend illness, and remain here for a day; I will make some pretext of dissatisfaction about the expense of the journey; I will affect to have had some passing difference, and he can thus leave us ere he be discovered. Not that I desire this, sir, far from it; this is the brightest episode in a long life. I never imagined that I should have enjoyed such an honour; but I have only to think of your safety, and if an old woman, unobservant, and unremarking as myself, could penetrate your disguise, why not others more keensighted and inquisitive? Don't you agree with me?"

"There is much force in what you say, madam," said I, with dignity, "and your words touch me profoundly." I thought this a happy expression, for it

conveyed a sort of grand condescension that seemed to hit off the occasion.

"You would never guess how I recognised you, sir," said she.

"Never, madam." I could have given my oath to this, if required.

"Well," said she, with a bland smile, "it was from the resemblance to your mother!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes; you are far more like *her*, than your father, and you are scarcely so tall as he was."

"Perhaps not, madam."

"But you have his manner, sir, the graceful and captivating dignity that distinguished all your house; this would betray you to the eyes of all who have enjoyed the high privilege of knowing your family."

The allusion to our house showed that we were royalties, and I laid my hand on my heart, and bowed as a prince ought, blandly but haughtily.

"Ah, sir," said she, with a deep sigh, "your present enterprise fills me with apprehension. Are you not afraid, yourself, of the consequences?"

I sighed, too, and if the truth were to be told, I was very much afraid.

"But, of course, you are acting under advice, and with the counsel of those well able to guide you."

"I cannot say I am, madam; I am free to tell you that every step I am now taking is self-suggested."

"Oh, then, let me implore you to pause, sir," said she, falling on her knees before me, "let me thus

entreat of you not to go further in a path so full of danger."

"Shall I confess, madam," said I, proudly, "that I do not see these dangers you speak of."

I thought that on this hint she would talk out, and I might be able to pierce the veil of the mystery, and discover who I was; for though very like my mother, and shorter than my father, I was sorely puzzled about my parentage; but she only went off into generalities about the state of the Continent and the condition of Europe generally. I saw now that my best chance of ascertaining something about myself, was to obtain from her the newspaper that first suggested her discovery of me, and I said half carelessly, "Let me see the paragraph which struck you in the *Courrier*."

"Ah, sir, you must excuse me, these ignoble writers have little delicacy in alluding to the misfortunes of the great; they seem to revenge the littleness of their own station on every such occasion."

"You can well imagine, madam, how time has accustomed me to such petty insults: show me the paper."

"Pray let me refuse you, sir; I would not, however blamelessly, be associated in your mind with what might offend you."

Again I protested that I was used to such attacks, that I knew all about the wretched hireling creatures who wrote them, and that instead of offending, they positively amused me — actually made me laugh.

Thus urged, she proceeded to search for the newspaper, and only after some minutes was it that she remembered Miss Herbert had taken it away to read in the garden. She proposed to send the servant to fetch it, but this I would not permit, pretending at last to concur in her own previously expressed contempt for the paragraph — but secretly promising myself to go in search of it the moment I should be at liberty — and once more she resumed the theme of my rashness, and my dangers, and all the troubles I might possibly bring upon my family, and the grief I might occasion my grandmother.

Now as there are few men upon whom the ties of family and kindred imposed less rigid bonds, I was rather provoked at being reminded of obligations to my grandmother, and was almost driven to declare that she weighed for very little in the balance of my plans and motives. The old lady, however, rescued me from the indiscretion by a fervent entreaty that I would at least ask a certain person what he thought of my present step.

“Will you do this?” said she, with tears in her eyes. “Will you do it, now?”

I promised her faithfully.

“Will you do it here, sir, at this table, and let me have the proudest memory in my life to recal the incident?”

“I should like an hour or two for reflection,” said I, pushed very hard by this insistence of hers, for I was sorely puzzled whom I was to write to.

"Oh," said she, still tearfully, "is it not the habit of hesitating, sir, has cost your house so dearly?"

"No," said I, "we have been always accounted prompt in action and true to our engagements."

Heaven forgive me! but in this vainglorious speech I was alluding to the motto of the Potts' crest, "*Vigilantibus omnia fausta*;" or, as some one rendered it, "Potts answers to the night-bell."

She smiled faintly at my remark. I wonder how she would have looked had she read the thought that suggested it.

"But you *will* write to him, sir?" said she, once more.

I laid my hand over what anatomists call the region of the heart, and tried to look like Charles Edward in the prints. Meanwhile, my patience was beginning to fail me, and I felt that if the mystification were to last much longer, I should infallibly lose my presence of mind. Fortunately, the old lady was so full of her theme that she only asked to be let talk away without interruption, with many an allusion to the dear Count and the adored Duchess, and a fervent hope that I might be ultimately reconciled to them both, a wish which I had tact enough to perceive required the most guarded reserve on my part.

"I know I am indiscreet, sir," said she, at last; "but you must pardon one whose zeal outruns her reason."

And I bowed grandly, as I might have done in extending mercy to some captive taken in battle.

"There is but one favour more, sir, I have to beg."

"Speak it, madam. As the courtier remarked, if it be possible it *is* done, if impossible it *shall* be done."

"Well, sir, it is that you will not leave us till you hear from ——" She hesitated, as if afraid to say the name, and then added, "the Rue St. Georges. Will you give me this pledge?"

Now, though this would have been, all things considered, an arrangement very like to have lasted my life, I could not help hesitating ere I assented, not to say that our dear friend of the Rue St. Georges, whoever he was, might possibly not concur in all the delusions indispensable to my happiness. I therefore demurred — that is, in legal acceptance, I deferred assent — as though to say, "We'll see."

"At all events, sir, you'll accompany us to Como?"

"You have my pledge to that, madam."

"And meanwhile, sir, you agree with me that it is better I should continue to behave towards you with a cold and distant reserve."

"Unquestionably."

"Rarely meeting, seldom or never conversing."

"I should say, never, madam; making, in fact, any communication you may desire to reach me through the intervention of that young person — I forget her name."

"Miss Herbert, sir."

"Exactly; and who appears gentle and unobtrusive."

"She is a gentlewoman by birth, sir," said the old lady, tetchily.

"I have no doubt of it, madam, or she would not be found in association with *you*."

She curtseyed deeply at the compliment, and I bowed as low, and backing and bowing I gained the door, dying with eagerness to make my escape.

"Will you pardon me, sir, if, after all the agitation of this meeting, I may not feel equal to appear at dinner to-day?"

"You will charge that young person to give news of your health, however," said I, insinuating that I expected to see Miss Herbert.

"Certainly, sir; and if it be your pleasure that she should dine with you, to preserve appearances ——"

"You are right, madam; your remark is full of wisdom. I shall expect to meet her." And again I bowed low, and ere she recovered from another reverential curtsey, I had closed the door behind me, and was half-way down stairs.

CHAPTER XX.

As between the man who achieves greatness and him who has greatness thrust upon him there lies a whole world of space, so is there an immense interval between one who is the object of his own delusions and him who forms the subject of delusion to others.

My reader may have already noticed that nothing was easier for me than to lend myself to the idle current of my fancy. Most men who build "castles in Spain," as the old adage calls them, do so purely to astonish their friends. *I* indulged in these architectural extravagances in a very different spirit. I built my castle to live in it; from foundation to roof-tree, I planned every detail of it to suit my own taste, and all my study was to make it as habitable and comfortable as I could. Ay, and what's more, live in it I did, though very often the tenure was a brief one; sometimes while breaking my egg at breakfast, sometimes as I drew on my gloves to walk out, and yet no terror of a short lease ever deterred me from finishing the edifice in the most expensive manner. I gilded my architraves and frescoed my ceilings as though all were to endure for centuries; and laid out the gardens and disposed the parterres as though I were to walk in them in my extreme old age. This faculty of

lending myself to an illusion by no means adhered to me where the deception was supplied by another; from the moment I entered one of *their* castles, I felt myself in a strange house. I continually forgot where the stairs were, what this gallery opened on, where that corridor led to. No use was it to say, "You are at home here. You are at your own fireside." I knew and I felt that I was not.

By this declaration, I mean my reader to understand that, while ready for any exigency of a story devised by myself, I was perfectly miserable at playing a part written for me by a friend; nor was this feeling diminished by the thought that I really did not know the person I was believed to represent; nor had I the very vaguest clue to his antecedents or belongings.

As I set out in search of Miss Herbert, these were the reflections I revolved, occasionally asking myself, "Is the old lady at all touched in the upper story? Is there not something Private Asylum-ish in these wanderings?" But still, apart from this special instance, she was a marvel of acuteness and good sense. I found Miss Herbert in a little arbour at her work; the newspaper on the bench beside her.

"So," said she, without looking up, "you have been making a long visit up-stairs. You found Mrs. Keats very agreeable, or you were so yourself."

"Is there anything wrong hereabouts?" said I, touching my forehead with my finger.

"Nothing whatever."

"No fancies, no delusions about certain people?"

"None whatever."

"None of the family suspected of anything odd, or eccentric?"

"Not that I have ever heard of. Why do you ask?"

"Well, it was a mere fancy, perhaps, on my part; but her manner to-day struck me as occasionally strange — almost flighty."

"And on what subject?"

"I am scarcely at liberty to say that; in fact I am not at all free to divulge it," said I, mysteriously, and somewhat gratified to remark that I had excited a most intense curiosity on her part to learn the subject of our interview.

"Oh, pray do not make any imprudent revelations to me," said she, pettishly; "which, apart from the indiscretion, would have the singular demerit of affording me not the slightest pleasure. I am not afflicted with the malady of curiosity."

"What a blessing to you! Now, I am the most inquisitive of mankind. I feel that if I were a clerk in a bank, I'd spend the day prying into every one's account, and learning the exact state of his balance-sheet. If I were employed in the post-office, no terror of the law could restrain me from reading the letters. Tell me that any one has a secret in his heart, and I feel I could cut him open to get at it!"

"I don't think you are giving a flattering picture of yourself in all this," said she, peevishly.

"I am aware of that, Miss Herbert; but I am also

one of those who do not trade upon qualities they have no pretension to."

She flushed a deep crimson at this, and after a moment said:

"Has it not occurred to you, sir, that people who seldom meet except to exchange ungracious remarks, would show more judgment by avoiding each other's society?"

Oh, how my heart thrilled at this pettish speech! In Hans Grüter's "Courtship," he says, "I knew she loved me, for we never met without a quarrel." "I have thought of that too, Miss Herbert," said I, "but there are outward observances to be kept up, conventionalities to be respected."

"None of which, however, require that you should come out and sit here while I am at my work," said she, with suppressed passion.

"I came out here to search for the newspaper," said I, taking it up, and stretching myself on the grassy sward to read at leisure.

She arose at once, and gathering all the articles of her work into a basket, walked away.

"Don't let me hunt you away, Miss Herbert," said I, indolently; "anywhere else will suit me just as well. Pray don't go." But without vouchsafing to utter a word, or even turn her head, she continued her way towards the house.

"The morning she slapped my face," says Hans, "filled the measure of my bliss, for I then saw she could not control her feelings for me." This passage recurred to me as I lay there, and I hugged myself in

the thought that such a moment of delight might yet be mine. The profound German explains this sentiment well. "With women," says he, "love is like the idol worship of an Indian tribe; at the moment their hearts are bursting with devotion, they like to cut and wound and maltreat their god. With *them*, this is the ecstasy of their passion."

I now saw that the girl was in love with me, and that she did not know it herself. I take it that the sensations of a man who suddenly discovers that the pretty girl he has been admiring is captivated by his attentions, are very like what a head clerk may feel at being sent for by the house, and informed that he is now one of the firm! This may seem a commercial formula to employ, but it will serve to show my meaning, and as I lay there on that velvet turf, what a delicious vision spread itself around me. At one moment we were rich, travelling in splendour through Europe, amassing art-treasures wherever we went, and despoiling all the great galleries of their richest gems. I was the associate of all that was distinguished in literature and science, and my wife the chosen friend of queens and princesses. How unaffected we were, how unspoiled by fortune! Approachable by all, our graceful benevolence seemed to elevate its object and make of the recipient the benefactor. What a world of bliss this vile dross men call gold can scatter! "There — there, good people," said I, blandly, waving my hand, "no illuminations, no bonfires — your happy faces are the brightest of all welcomes." Then we

were suddenly poor — out of caprice just to see how we should like it — and living in a little cottage under Snowdon, and I was writing, Heaven knows what, for the periodicals, and my wife rocking a little urchin in a cradle, whom we constantly awoke by kissing, each pretending that it was all the other's fault, till we ratified a peace in the same fashion. Then I remembered the night, never to be forgotten, when I received my appointment as something in the antipodes, and we went up to town to thank the great man who bestowed it, and he asked us to dinner, and he was, I fancied, more than polite to my wife, and I sulked about it when we got home, and she petted and caressed me, and we were better friends than ever, and I swore I would not accept the minister's bounty, and we set off back again to our cottage in Wales, and there we were when I came to myself once more.

It is always pleasant — at least I have ever felt it so, on awaking from a dream, or a reverie — to know that one has borne himself well in some imaginary crisis of difficulty and peril. I like to think that I was in no hurry to get into the long-boat. I am glad I gave poor Dick that last fifty-pound note — my last in the world — and I rejoice to remember that I did not run away from that grizzly bear, but sent the four-pound ball right into the very middle of his forehead. You feel in all these that the metal of your nature has been tested, and come out pure gold: at all events, *I* did, and was very happy thereat. It was not till after some little time that I could get myself clear out

of dreamland, and back to the actual world of small debts and difficulties, and then I bethought me of the newspaper which lay unread beside me.

I began it now, resolved to examine it from end to end, till I discovered the passage that alluded to me. It was so far pleasant reading, that it was novel and original. A very able leader set forth that nothing could equal the blessings of the Pope's rule at Rome — no people were so happy — so prosperous — or so contented — that all the granaries were full, and all the gaols empty, and the only persons of small incomes in the state were the cardinals, and that they were too heavenly-minded to care for it. After this, there came some touching anecdotes of that good man the late King of Naples. And then there was a letter from Frohsdorf, with fifteen francs enclosed to the inhabitants of a village submerged by an inundation. There were pleasant little paragraphs, too, about England, and all the money she was spending to propagate infidelity and spread the slave-trade — the two great and especial objects of her policy — after which came insults to France and injustice to Ireland. The general tone of the print was war with every one but some twenty or thirty old ladies and gentlemen living in exile somewhere in Bohemia. Now none of these things touched *me*, and I was growing very weary of my search when I lighted upon the following:

“We are informed, on authority that we cannot question, that the young C. de P. is now making the tour of Germany alone and in disguise, his object being

to ascertain for himself, how the various relatives of his house, on the maternal side, would feel affected by any movement in France to renew his pretensions. Strange, undignified, and ill advised as such a step must seem, there is nothing in it at all repulsive to the well-known traditions of the younger branch. Our informant himself met the P. at Mayence, and speedily recognised him, from the marked resemblance he bears to the late duchess, his mother; he addressed him at once by his title, but was met by the cold assurance that he was mistaken, and that a casual similarity in features had already led others into the same error. The general — for our informant is an old and honoured soldier of France — confessed he was astounded at the *aplomb* and self-possession displayed by so young a man; and although their conversation lasted for nearly an hour, and ranged over a wide field, the C. never for an instant exposed himself to a detection, nor offered the slightest clue to his real rank and station. Indeed, he affected to be English by birth, which his great facility in the language enabled him to do. When he quitted Mayence it was for central Germany."

Here was the whole mystery revealed, and I was no less a person than a royal prince — very like my mother, but neither so tall nor robust as my distinguished father! "Oh, Potts! in all the wildest ravings of your most florid moments you never arrived at this!"

A very strange thrill went through me as I finished this paragraph. It came this wise. There is, in one of Hoffman's tales, the story of a man who, in a com-

pact with the Fiend, acquired the power of personating whomsoever he pleased, but who, sated at last with the enjoyment of this privilege, and eager for a new sensation, determined he would try whether the part of the Devil himself might not be amusing. Apparently Mephistopheles won't stand joking, for he resented the liberty by depriving the transgressor of his identity for ever, and made him become each instant whatever character occurred to the mind of him he talked to.

Though the parallel scarcely applied, the very thought of it sent an aguish thrill through me — a terror so great and acute that it was very long before I could turn the medal round and read it on the reverse. There, indeed, was matter for vainglory! "It was but t'other day," thought I, "and Lord Keldrum and his friends fancied I was their intimate acquaintance, Jack Burgoyne; and though they soon found out the mistake, the error led to an invitation to dinner, a delightful evening, and, alas! that I should own, a variety of consequences, some of which proved less delightful. Now, however, Fortune is in a more amiable mood: she will have it that I resemble a prince. It is a project which I neither aid nor abet; but I am not churlish enough to refuse the *rôle* any more than I should spoil the Christmas revelries of a country-house by declining a part in a tableau, or in private theatricals. I say, in the one case as in the other, 'Here is Potts! make of him what you will. Never is he happier than by affording pleasure to his friends.' To what end, I would ask, should I rob that old lady up-

stairs at No. 12, evidently a widow, and with not too many enjoyments to solace her old age — why should I rob her of what she has herself called the proudest episode in her life? Are not, as the moralists tell us, all our joys fleeting? Why, then, object to this one that it may only last for a few days? Let us suppose it only to endure throughout our journey, and the poor old soul will be so happy, never caring for the fatigues of the road, never fretting about the innkeepers' charges, but delighted to know that his royal highness enjoys himself, and sits over his bottle of Chambertin every evening in the garden, apparently as devoid of care as though he were a bagman."

I cannot say how it may be with others, but, for myself, I have always experienced an immense sense of relief, actual repose, whenever I personated somebody else; I felt as though I had left the man Potts at home to rest and refresh himself, and took an airing as another gentleman: just as I might have spared my own paletot by putting on a friend's coat in a thunderstorm. Now I *did* wish for a little repose, I felt it would be good for me. As to the special part allotted me, I took it just as an obliging actor plays Hamlet or the Cock to convenience the manager. Mrs. Keats likes it, and, I repeat, I do not object to it.

It was evident that the old lady was not going to communicate her secret to her companion, and this was a great source of satisfaction to me. Whatever delusions I threw around Miss Herbert I intended should be lasting. The traits in which I would invest myself

to *her* eyes, my personal prowess, coolness in danger, skill in all manly exercises, together with a large range of general gifts and acquirements, I meant to accompany me through all time, and I am a sufficient believer in magnetism to feel assured that by imposing upon *her* I should go no small part of the road to deceiving myself, and that the first step in any gift is to suppose you are eminently suited to it, is a well-known and readily acknowledged maxim. Women grow pretty from looking in the glass; why should not men grow brave from constantly contemplating their own courage?

"Yes, Potts, be a Prince, and see how it will agree with you!"

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. KEATS came down, and our dinner that day was somewhat formal. I don't think any of us felt quite at ease, and, for my own part, it was a relief to me when the old lady asked my leave to retire after her coffee. "If you should feel lonely, sir, and if Miss Herbert's company would prove agreeable —"

"Yes," said I, languidly, "that young person will find me in the garden." And therewith I gave my orders for a small table under a great weeping-ash, and the usual accompaniment of my after-dinner hours, a cool flask of Chambertin. I had time to drink more than two-thirds of my Burgundy before Miss Herbert appeared. It was not that the hour hung heavily on me, or that I was not in a mood of considerable enjoyment, but, somehow, I was beginning to feel chafed and impatient at her long delay. Could she possibly have remonstrated against the impropriety of being left alone with a young man? Had she heard, by any mischance, that impertinent phrase by which I designated her? Had Mrs. Keats herself resented the cool style of my permission by a counter-order? "I wish I knew what detains her!" cried I to myself, just as I heard her step on the gravel, and then saw her coming, in very leisurely fashion, up the walk.

Determined to display an indifference the equal of her own, I waited till she was almost close; and then, rising languidly, I offered her a chair with a superb air of Brummelism, while I listlessly said, "Won't you take a seat?"

It was growing duskish, but I fancied I saw a smile on her lip as she sat down.

"May I offer you a glass of wine, or a cigar?" said I, carelessly.

"Neither, thank you," said she, with gravity.

"Almost all women of fashion smoke, now-a-days," I resumed. — "The Empress of the French smokes this sort of thing here; and the Queen of Bavaria smokes and chews."

She seemed rebuked at this, and said nothing.

"As for myself," said I, "I am nothing without tobacco — positively nothing. I remember one night — it was the fourth sitting of the Congress at Paris — that Sardinian fellow, you know his name, came to me and said,

"'There's that confounded question of the Danubian Provinces coming on to-morrow, and Gortschakoff is the only one who knows anything about it. Where are we to get at anything like information?'

"'When do you want it, count?' said I.

"'To-morrow, by eleven at latest. There must be at least a couple of hours to study it before the Congress meets.'

"'Tell them to bring in ten candles, fifty cigars, and two quires of foolscap,' said I; 'and let no one

pass this door till I ring.' At ten minutes to eleven next morning he had in his hands that memoir which Lord C. said embodied the prophetic wisdom of Edmund Burke with the practical statesmanship of the great Commoner. Perhaps you have read it?"

"No, sir."

"Your tastes do not probably incline to affairs of state. If so, only suggest what you'd like to talk on. I am indifferently skilled in most subjects. Are you for the poets? I am ready, from Dante to the Bigelow Papers. Shall it be arts? I know the whole thing from Memmling and his long-nosed saints, to Leech and the Punchists. Make it antiquities, agriculture, trade, dress, the drama, conchology, or cock-fighting — I'm your man; so go in, and don't be afraid that you'll disconcert me."

"I assure you, sir, that my fears would attach far more naturally to my own insufficiency."

"Well," said I, after a pause, "there's something in that. Macaulay used to be afraid of me. Whenever Mrs. Montagu Stanhope asked him to one of her Wednesday dinners, he always declined if I was to be there. You don't seem surprised at that?"

"No, sir," said she, in the same quiet, grave fashion.

"What's the reason, young lady," said I, somewhat sternly, "that you persist in saying 'sir' on every occasion that you address me? The ease of that intercourse that should subsist between us is marred by this

Americanism. The pleasant interchange of thought loses the charming feature of equality. How is this?"

"I am not at liberty to say, sir."

"You are not at liberty to say, young lady?" said I, severely. "You tell me distinctly that your manner towards me is based upon a something which you must not reveal?"

"I am sure, sir, you have too much generosity to press me on a subject of which I cannot, or ought not, to speak."

That fatal Burgundy had got into my brains, while the princely delusion was uppermost; and if I had been submitted to the thumbscrew now, I would have died one of the Orleans family. "Mademoiselle," said I, grandly, "I have been fortunately, or unfortunately, brought up in a class that never tolerates contradiction. When we ask, we feel that we order."

"Oh, sir, if you but knew the difficulty I am in —"

"Take courage, my dear creature," said I, blending condescension with something warmer. "You will at least be reposing your confidence where it will be worthily bestowed."

"But I have promised, not exactly promised, but Mrs. Keats enjoined me imperatively not to betray what she revealed to me."

"Gracious Powers!" cried I, "she has not surely communicated my secret — she has not told you who I am?"

"No, sir, I assure you most solemnly, that she has

not; but being annoyed by what she remarked as the freedom of my manner towards you at dinner, the readiness with which I replied to your remarks, and what she deemed the want of deference I displayed for them, she took me to task this evening, and without intending it, even before she knew, dropped certain expressions which showed me that you were one of the very highest in rank, though it was your pleasure to travel for the moment in this obscurity and disguise. She quickly perceived the indiscretion she had committed, and said, "Now, Miss Herbert, that an accident has put you in possession of certain circumstances, which I had neither the will nor the right to reveal, will you do me the inestimable favour to employ this knowledge in such a way as may not compromise me." I told her, of course, that I would; and having remarked how she occasionally — inadvertently, perhaps — used 'sir,' in addressing you, I deemed the imitation a safe one, while it as constantly acted as a sort of monitor over myself to repress any relapse into familiarity."

"I am very sorry for all this," said I, taking her hand in mine, and employing my most insinuating of manners towards her. "As it is more than doubtful that I shall ever resume the station that once pertained to me; as, in fact, it may be my fortune to occupy for the rest of life an humble and lowly condition, my ambition would have been to draw towards me in that modest station such sympathies and affections as might attach to one so circumstanced. My plan was to assume

an obscure name, seek out some unfrequented spot, and there, with the love of one — one only — solve the great problem, whether happiness is not as much the denizen of the thatched cottage as of the gilded palace. The first requirement of my scheme was that my secret should be in my own keeping. One can steel his own heart against vain regrets and longings; but one cannot secure himself against the influence of those sympathies which come from without, the unwise promptings of zealous followers, the hopes and wishes of those who read your submission as mere apathy."

I paused and sighed; she sighed too, and there was a silence between us.

"Must she not feel very happy and very proud," thought I, "to be sitting there on the same bench with a prince, her hand in his, and he pouring out all his confidence in her ear? I cannot fancy a situation more full of interest."

"After all, sir," said she, calmly, "remember that Mrs. Keats alone knows your secret. *I* have not the vaguest suspicion of it."

"And yet," said I, tenderly, "it is to *you* I would confide it; it is in *your* keeping I would wish to leave it; it is from *you* I would ask counsel as to my future."

"Surely, sir, it is not to such inexperience as mine you would address yourself in a difficulty?"

"The plan I would carry out demands none of that crafty argument called 'knowing the world.' All that acquaintance with the by-play of life, its conventionalities and exactions, would be sadly out of place in an

Alpine village, or a Tyrolese Dorf, where I mean to pitch my tent. Do you not think that your interest might be persuaded to track me so far?"

"Oh, sir, I shall never cease to follow your steps with the deepest anxiety."

"Would it not be possible for me to secure a lease of that sympathy?"

"Can you tell me what o'clock it is, sir?" said she, very gravely.

"Yes," said I, rather put out by so sudden a diversion; "it is a few minutes after nine."

"Pray excuse my leaving you, sir, but Mrs. Keats takes her tea at nine, and will expect me." And, with a very respectful curtsey, she withdrew, before I could recover my astonishment at this abrupt departure.

"I trust that my royal highness said nothing indiscreet," muttered I to myself; "though, upon my life, this hasty exit would seem to imply it."

CHAPTER XXII.

WE continued our journey the next morning, but it was not without considerable difficulty that I succeeded in maintaining my former place in the cabriolet. That stupid old woman fancied that princes were born to be bored, and suggested accordingly that I should travel inside with her; leaving the macaw and the toy terriers to keep company with Miss Herbert. It was not only by insisting on an outside place as a measure of health that I at last prevailed, telling her that Dr. Corvisart was peremptory on two points regarding me. "Let him," said he, "have abundance of fresh air, and never be without some young companion."

And so we were again in our little leathern tent, high up in the fresh breezy atmosphere, above dusty roads, and with a glorious view over that lovely country that forms the approach to the Black Forest. The road was hilly, and the carriage-way a heavy one, but we had six horses who trotted along briskly, shaking their merry bells, and flourishing their scarlet tassels, while the postillions cracked their whips or broke out into occasional bugle performances, principally intended to announce to the passing peasants that we were very great folk, and well able to pay for all the noise we required.

I was not ashamed to confess my enjoyment in thus whirling along at some ten miles the hour, remembering how that great sage Dr. Johnson had confessed to a like pleasure, and animated by the inspiring air and the lovely landscape, could not help asking Miss Herbert if she did not feel it "very jolly?"

She assented with a sort of constrained curtesy that by no means responded to the warmth of my own sensations, and I felt vexed and chafed accordingly.

"Perhaps you prefer travelling inside?" said I, with some pique.

"No, sir."

"Perhaps you dislike travelling altogether?"

"No, sir."

"Perhaps —" But I checked myself — and, with a somewhat stiff air, I said, "Would you like a book?"

"If it would not be rude to read, sir, while you —"

"Oh, not at all, never mind me, I have more than enough to think of. Here are some things by Dumas, and Paul Féval, and some guide-book trash." And with that I handed her several volumes, and sank back into my corner in sulky isolation.

Here was a change! Ten minutes ago all nature smiled on me; from the lark in the high heavens to the chirping grasshopper in the tall maize-field, it was one song of joy and gladness. The very clouds as they swept past threw new and varied light over the

scene, as though to show fresh effects of beauty on the landscape — the streams went by in circling eddies, like smiles upon a lovely face — and now all was sad and crape-covered! “What has wrought this dreary change,” thought I; “is it possible that the cold looks of a young woman, good-looking, I grant, but no regular downright beauty after all, can have altered the aspect of the whole world to you? Are you so poor a creature in yourself, Potts, so beggared in your own resources, so barren in all the appliances of thought and reflection, that if your companion, whoever she or he may be, sulk, you must needs reflect the humour? Are you nothing but the mirror that displays what is placed before it?”

I set myself deliberately to scan the profile beside me; her black veil, drawn down on the side furthest from me, formed a sort of back-ground, which displayed her pale features more distinctly. All about the brow and orbit was beautifully regular, but the mouth was, I fancied, severe; there was a slight retraction of the upper lip that seemed to imply over-firmness, and then the chin was deeply indented — “a sign,” Lavater says, “of those who have a will of their own.” “Potts,” thought I, “she’d rule you — that’s a nature would speedily master yours. I don’t think there’s any softness either, any of that yielding gentleness there, that makes the poetry of womanhood; besides, I suspect she’s worldly — those sharply cut nostrils are very worldly! She is, in fact” — and here I unconsciously uttered my thoughts aloud — “she

is, in fact, one to say, 'Potts, how much have you got a-year? Let us have it in figures.'"

"So you are still ruminating over the life of that interesting creature," said she, laying down her book to laugh; "and shall I confess, I lay awake half the night, inventing incidents and imagining situations for him."

"For whom?" said I, innocently.

"For Potts, of course. I cannot get him out of my head such as I first fancied he might be, and I see now, by your unconscious allusion to him, that he has his place in your imagination also."

"You mistake, Miss Herbert — at least you very much misapprehend my conception of that character. The Potts family has a high historic tradition. Sir Constantine Potts was cup-bearer to Henry II., and I really see no reason why ridicule should attach to one who may be, most probably, his descendant."

"I'm very sorry, sir, if I should have dared to differ with you; but when I heard the name first, and in connection with two such names as Algernon Sydney, and when I thought by what strange accident did they ever meet in the one person —"

"You are very young, Miss Herbert, and therefore not removed from the category of the teachable," said I, with a grand didactic look. "Let me guard you, therefore, against the levity of chance inferences. What would you say if a person named Potts were to make the offer of his hand? I mean, if he were a man in all respects acceptable, a gentleman captivating in

manner and address, agreeable in person, graceful and accomplished — what would you reply to his advances?"

"Really, sir, I am shocked to think of the humble opinion I may be conveying of my sense and judgment, but I'm afraid I should tell him it is impossible I could ever permit myself to be called Mrs. Potts."

"But, in Heaven's name, why? — I ask you why?"

"Oh, sir! don't be angry with me; it surely does not deserve such a penalty; at the worst, it is a mere caprice on my part."

"I am not angry, young lady, I am simply provoked, I am annoyed to think that a prejudice so unworthy of you should exercise such a control over your judgment."

"I am quite ashamed, sir, to have been the occasion of so much displeasure to you. I hope and trust you will ascribe it to my ignorance of life and the world."

"If you are dissatisfied with yourself, Miss Herbert, I have no more to say," said I, taking up a book, and pretending to read, while I felt such a disgust with myself, that if I hadn't been strapped up with a leather apron up to my chin, I think I should have thrown myself headlong down and let the wheel pass over me. "What is it, Potts, that is corrupting and destroying the naturally fine and noble nature you are certainly endowed with? Is it this confounded elevation to

princely rank? If you were not a royal highness would you have dared to utter such cruelties as these? Would you, in your most savage of moods, have presumed to make that pale cheek paler, and forced a tear-drop into that liquid eye? I always used to think that the greatest effort of a man was to keep himself on a level with those born above him. I now find it is far harder to stoop than to stand on tip-toe. Such a pain in the back comes of always bending, and it is so difficult to do it gracefully!"

I was positively dying to be what the French call "*bon prince*," and yet I didn't know how to set about it. I could not take off one of my decorations — a cross, or a ribbon — for I had none; nor give it, because she, being a woman, couldn't wear it. I couldn't make her one of the court ladies, for there was no court; and yet it was clear something should be done, if one only knew what it was. "I suppose now," said I to myself, "a real R.H. would see his way here at once; the right thing to do, the exact expression to use would occur as naturally to his mind as all this embarrassment presents itself to mine. 'Whenever your head cannot guide you,' says a Spanish proverb, 'ask your heart;' and so I did, and my heart spoke thus: 'Tell her, Potts, who you are, and what; say to her, "Listen, young lady, to the words of truth from one who could tell you far more glibly, far more freely, and far more willingly, a whole bushel of lies. It will sit light on his heart that he deceive the old lady inside, but *you* he cannot, will not deceive. Do

not deem the sacrifice a light one; it cost St. George far less to go out dragon-hunting than it costs me to slay this small monster who ever prompts me to feats of fancy."'''

"I am very sorry to be troublesome, sir, but as we change horses here, I will ask you to assist me to alight; the weather looks very threatening, and some drops of rain have already fallen."

These words roused me from my reverie to action, and I got down, not very dexterously either, for I slipped, and made the postillion laugh, and then I helped her, who accomplished the descent so neatly, so gracefully, showing the least portion of such an ankle, and accidentally giving me such a squeeze of the hand! The next moment she was lost to me, the clanking steps were drawn up, the harsh door banged to, and I was alone — all alone in the world.

Like a sulky eagle, sick of the world, I climbed up to my eyrie. I no longer wished for sunshine or scenery; nay, I was glad to see the postboys put on their overcoats and prepare for a regular down-pour. I liked to think there are some worse off than even Potts. In half-an-hour *they* will be drenched to the skin, and I'll not feel a drop of it!

The little glass slide at my back was now withdrawn, and Miss Herbert's pale, sweet face appeared at it. She was saying that Mrs. Keats urgently entreated I would come inside, that she was so uneasy at my being exposed to such a storm.

I refused, and was about to enter into an account

of my ascent of Mont Blanc, when the slide was closed and my listener lost to me.

"Is it possible, Potts," said I, "that she has detected this turn of yours for the imaginative line, and that she will not encourage it, even tacitly? Has she said, 'There is a young man of genius, gifted marvellously with the richest qualities, and yet such is the exuberance of his fancy that he is positively its slave. Not content to let him walk the earth like other men, she attaches wings to him, and carries him off into the upper air. I will endeavour, however hard the task, to clip his feathers and bring him back to the common haunts of men'? Try it, fair enchantress — try it!"

The rain was now coming down in torrents, and with such swooping gusts of wind, that I was forced to fasten the leather curtain in front of me, and sit in utter darkness, denied even the passing pleasure of seeing the drenched postboys bobbing up and down on the wet saddles. I grew moody and sad. Every Blue Devil of my acquaintance came to pay his visit to me, and brought a few more of his private friends. I bethought me that I was hourly travelling away further and further from my home; that all this long road must surely be retraced one day or other, though not in a carriage and post, but probably in a one-horse cart, with a mounted gendarme on either side of it, and a string to my two wrists in their bridle hands. I thought of that vulgar herd of mankind so ready to weep over a romance, and yet send the man who

acts one to a penal settlement. I thought how I should be described as the artful knave, the accomplished swindler. As if I was the first man who ever took an exaggerated estimate of his own merits! Go into the House of Commons, visit the National Gallery, dine at a bar or a military mess, frequent, in one word any of the haunts of men, and with what *pièces pour servir à l'histoire* of self-deception will you come back loaded!

The sliding window at my back was again drawn aside, and I heard Miss Herbert's voice:

"If I am not giving you too much trouble, sir, would you kindly see if I have not dropped a bracelet — a small jet bracelet — in the coupé."

"I'm in the dark here, but I'll do my best to find it."

"We are very nearly so too," said she; "and Mrs. Keats is fast asleep, quite unmindful of the thunder."

With some struggling I managed to get down on my knees, and was soon engaged in a very vigorous search. To aid me, I lighted a lucifer match, and by its flickering glare I saw right in front of me that beautiful pale face, enclosed as it were in a frame by the little window. She blushed at the fixedness of my gaze, for I utterly forgot myself in my admiration, and stared as though at a picture. My match went out and I lit another. Alas! there she was still, and I could not force myself to turn away, but gazed on in rapture.

"I'm sorry to give you this trouble, sir," said she,

in some confusion. "Pray never mind it. It will doubtless be found this evening when we arrive."

Another lucifer, and now I pretended to be in most eager pursuit; but somehow my eyes would look up and rest upon her sweet countenance.

"A diamond bracelet, you said?" muttered I, not knowing what I was saying.

"No, sir, mere jet, and of no value whatever, save to myself. I am really distressed at all the inconvenience I have occasioned you. I entreat you to think no more of it."

My match was out, and I had not another. "Was ever a man robbed of such ecstasy for a mere pennyworth of stick and a little sulphur? O Fortune! is not this downright cruelty?"

As I mumbled my complaints, I searched away with an honest zeal, patting the cushions all over, and poking away into most inscrutable pockets and recesses, while she, in a most beseeching tone, apologised for her request and besought me to forget it.

"Found! found!" cried I, in true delight, as I chanced upon the treasure at my feet.

"Oh, sir, you have made me *so* happy, and I am so much obliged, and so grateful to you!"

"Not another word, I beseech you," whispered I; "you are actually turning my head with ecstasy. Give me your hand; let me clasp it on your arm, and I am repaid."

"Will you kindly pass it to me, sir, through the window?" said she, timidly.

"Ah!" cried I, in anguish, "your gratitude has been very fleeting."

She muttered something I could not catch, but I heard the rustle of her sleeve against the window-frame, and dark as it was, pitch dark, I knew her hand was close to me. Opening the bracelet, I passed it round her wrist as reverently as though it were the arm of a Queen of Spain, one touch of whom is high treason. I trembled so, that it was some seconds before I could make the clasp meet. This done, I felt she was withdrawing her hand, when with something like that head-long impulse by which men set their lives on one chance, I seized the fingers in my grasp, and implanted two rapturous kisses on them. She snatched her hand hastily away, closed the window with a sharp bang, and I was alone once more in my darkness, but in such a flutter of blissful delight that even the last reproving gesture could scarcely pain me. It mattered little to me that day that the lightning felled a great pine and threw it across the road, that the torrents were so swollen that we only could pass them with crowds of peasants around the carriage with ropes and poles to secure it, that four oxen were harnessed in front of our leaders to enable us to meet the hurricane, or that the postboys were paid treble their usual fare for all their perils to life and limb. I cared for none of these. Enough for me that, on this day, I can say with Schiller,

"Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück,
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

WE arrived at a small inn on the borders of the Titi-see at nightfall; and though the rain continued to come down unceasingly, and huge masses of cloud hung half way down the mountain, I could see that the spot was highly picturesque and romantic. Before I could descend from my lofty eminence, so strapped and buttoned and buckled up was I, the ladies had time to get out and reach their rooms. When I asked to be shown to mine, the landlord, in a very free-and-easy tone, told me that there was nothing for me but a double-bedded room, which I must share with another traveller. I scouted this proposition at once with a degree of force, and, indeed, of violence, that I fancied must prove irresistible; but the stupid German, armed with native impassiveness, simply said, "Take it or leave it, it's nothing to me," and left me to look after his business. I stormed and fumed. I asked the chambermaid if she knew who I was, and sent for the Hausknecht to tell him that all Europe should ring with this indignity. I more than hinted that the landlord had sealed his own doom, and that his miserable cabaret had seen its last days of prosperity.

I asked next, where was the Jew pedlar? I felt certain he was a fellow with pencil-cases and pipe-

heads, who owned the other half of the territory. Could he not be bought up? He would surely sleep in the cow-house, if it were too wet to go up a tree!

François came to inform me that he was out fishing; that he fished all day, and only came home after dark; his man had told him so much.

"His man? Why, has he a servant?" asked I.

"He's not exactly like a servant, sir; but a sort of peasant with a green jacket and a tall hat and leather gaiters, like a Tyrolese."

"Strolling actors, I'll be sworn," muttered I; "fellows taking a week's holiday on their way to a new engagement. How long have they been here?"

"Came on Monday last in the diligence, and are to remain till the twentieth; two florins a day they give for everything."

"What nation are they?"

"Germans, sir, regular Germans; never a pipe out of their mouths, master and man. I learned all this from his servant, for they have put up a bed for me in his room."

A sudden thought now struck me: "Why should not François give up his bed to this stranger, and occupy the one in my room?" This arrangement would suit *me* better, and it ought to be all the same to Hamlet or Goetz, or whatever he was. "Just lounge about the door, François," said I, "till he comes back; and when you see him, open the thing to him, civilly, of course; and if a crown piece, or even two, will help

the negotiation, slip it slyly into his hand. You understand?"

François winked like a man who had corrupted custom-house officers in his time, and even bribed bigger functionaries at a pinch.

"If he's in trade, you know, François, just hint that if he sends in his pack in the course of the evening, the ladies might possibly take a fancy to something."

Another wink.

"And throw out — vaguely, of course, very vaguely — that we are swells, but in strict *incog*."

A great scoundrel was François; he was Swiss, and could cheat any one, and, like a regular rogue, never happier than when you gave him a mission of deceit or duplicity. In a word, when I gave him his instructions, I regarded the negotiation as though it were completed, and now addressed myself to the task of looking after our supper, which, with national obstinacy, the landlord declared could not be ready before nine o'clock. As usual, Mrs. Keats had gone to bed immediately on arriving; but when sending me a "Good night" by her maid, she added, "that whenever supper was served, Miss Herbert would come down."

We had no sitting-room save the common room of the inn, a long, low-ceilinged, dreary chamber, with a huge green-tile stove in one corner, and down the centre a great oak table, which might have served about forty guests. At one end of this three covers

were laid for us, the napkins enclosed in bone circlets, and the salt in great leaden receptacles — like big ink bottles — a very ancient brass lamp, giving its dim radiance over all. It was wearisome to sit down on the straight-backed wooden chairs, and not less irksome to walk on the gritty, sanded floor, and so I lounged in one of the windows, and watched the rain. As I looked, I saw the figure of a man with a fishing-basket and rod on his shoulder approaching the house. I guessed at once it was our stranger, and opening the window a few inches, I listened to hear the dialogue between him and François. The window was enclosed in the same porch as the door, so that I could hear a good deal of what passed. François accosted him familiarly, questioned him as to his sport, and the size of the fish he had taken. I could not hear the reply, but I remarked that the stranger emptied his basket, and was despatching the contents in different directions; some were for the curé, and some for the postmaster, some for the brigadier of the gendarmerie, and one large trout for the miller's daughter.

“A good-looking wench, I'll be sworn,” said François, as he heard the message delivered.

Again the stranger said something, and I thought, from the tone, angrily, and François responded; and then I saw them walk apart for a few seconds, during which François seemed to have all the talk to himself, a good omen, as it appeared to me, of success, and a sure warranty that the treaty was signed. François,

however, did not come to report progress, and so I closed the window and sat down.

"So you have got company to-night, Master Ludwig," said the stranger, as he entered, followed by the host, who speedily seemed to whisper that one of the arrivals was then before him. The stranger bowed stiffly, but courteously to me, which I returned not less haughtily; and I now saw that he was a man about thirty-five, but much freckled, with a light-brown beard and moustache. On the whole, a good-looking fellow, with a very upright carriage, and something of a cavalry soldier in the swing of his gait.

"Would you like it at once, Herr Graf?" said the host, obsequiously.

"Oh, he's a count, is he?" said I, with a sneer to myself. "These countships go a short way with *me*."

"You had better consult your other guests; *I* am ready when *they* are," said the stranger.

Now, though the speech was polite, and even considerate, I lost sight of the courtesy in thinking that it implied we were about to sup in common, and that the third cover was meant for him.

"I say, landlord," said I, "you don't intend to tell me that you have no private sitting-room, but that ladies of condition must needs come down and sup here with" — I was going to say, "Heaven knows who;" but I halted, and said — "with the general company."

"That, or nothing!" was the sturdy response. "The guests in this house eat here, or don't eat at all; eh, Herr Graf?"

"Well, so far as my experience goes, I can corroborate you," said the stranger, laughing. "Though, you may remember, I have often counselled you to make some change."

"That you have; but I don't want to be better than my father and my grandfather; and the Arch-Duke Charles stopped here in *their* time, and never quarrelled with his treatment."

I told the landlord to apprise the young lady whenever supper was ready, and I walked to a distant part of the room and sat down.

In about two minutes after, Miss Herbert appeared, and the supper was served at once. I had not met her since the incident of the bracelet, and I was shocked to see how cold she was in her manner, and how resolute in repelling the most harmless familiarity towards her.

I wanted to explain to her that it was through no fault of mine we were to have the company of that odious stranger, that it was one of the disagreeables of these wayside hostels, and to be borne with patience, and that though he was a stage-player, or a sergeant of dragoons, he was reasonably well bred and quiet. I did contrive to mumble out some of this explanation, but, instead of attending to it, I saw her eyes following the stranger, who had just draped a large riding-cloak over a clothes-horse behind her chair, to serve

as a screen. Thanks are all very well, but I'm by no means certain that gratitude requires such a sweet glance as that, not to mention that I saw the expression in her eyes for the first time.

I thought the soup would choke me. I almost hoped it might. Othello was a mild case of jealousy compared to me, and I felt that strangling would not half glut my vengeance. And how they talked! — he complimenting her on her accent, and she telling him how her first governess was a Hanoverian from Celle, where they are all such purists. There was nothing they did not discuss in those detestable gutturals, and as glibly as if it had been a language meet for human lips. I could not eat a mouthful, but I drank and watched them. The fellow was not long in betraying himself: he was soon deep in the drama. He knew every play of Schiller by heart, and quoted the Wallenstein, the Robbers, Don Carlos, and Maria Stuart at will; so, too, was he familiar with Goethe and Lessing. He had all the swinging intonation of the boards, and declaimed so very professionally that, as he concluded a passage, I cried out, without knowing it,

“Take that for your benefit — it's the best you have given yet.”

Oh, Lord, how they laughed! She covered up her face and smothered it; but he lay back, and holding the table with both hands, he positively shouted and screamed aloud. I would have given ten years of life for the courage to have thrown my glass of

wine in his face; but it was no use, nature had been a niggard to me in that quarter, and I had to sit and hear it — exactly so, sit and hear it — while they made twenty attempts to recover their gravity and behave like ladies and gentlemen, and when, no sooner would they look towards me, than off they were again as bad as before.

I resolved a dozen cutting sarcasms, all beginning with, "Whenever I feel assured that you have sufficiently regained the customary calm of good society," but the dessert was served ere I could complete the sentence; and now they were deep in the lyric poets, Uhland, and Körner, and Freiligrath, and the rest of them. As I listened to their enthusiasm, I wondered why people never went into raptures over a cold in the head. But it was not to end here: there was an old harpsichord in the room, and this he opened and set to work on in that fearful two-handed fashion your German alone understands. The poor old crippled instrument shook on its three legs, while the fourth fell clean off, and the loose wires jangled and jarred like knives in a tray; but he only sang the louder, and her ecstasies grew all the greater too.

Heaven reward you, dear old Mrs. Keats, when you sent word down that you couldn't sleep a wink, and begging them to "send that noisy band something and let them go away;" and then Miss Herbert wished him a sweet good night, and he accompanied her to the door, and then there was more good night, and I believe I had a short fit, but when I came

to myself he was sitting smoking his cigar opposite me.

"You are no relative, no connexion of the young lady who has just left the room?" said he to me, with a grave manner, so significant of something under it, that I replied hastily, "None — none whatever."

"Was that servant who spoke to me in the porch, as I came in this evening, yours?"

"Yes." This I said more boldly, as I suspected he was coming to the question François had opened.

"He mentioned to me," said he, slowly, and puffing his cigar at easy intervals, "that you desire your servant should sleep in the same room with you. I am always happy to meet the wishes of courteous fellow-travellers, and so I have ordered my servant to give you *his* bed; he will sleep up-stairs in what was intended for *you*. Good night." And with an insolent nod he lounged out of the room and left me.

END OF VOL. I.

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